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ABSTRACT

This book probes the ways ads persuade people to purchase, and attempts to teach individuals to become more discerning consumers. Critical thinking, when applied to analyzing ads, benefits consumers by helping them recognize patterns of persuasion and sort incoming information in order to get to the hidden message. The book s basic premise is that all people are benefit-seekers and persuaders are benefit-promisers. There are four dynamics of benefit-seeking behaviors: (1) protection, or keeping a perceived "good"; (2) relief, or getting rid of a perceived "bad"; (3) acquisition, or getting a new "good"; and (4) prevention, or avoiding getting a new "bad." The book identifies a five-part strategy of the basic pattern of advertising ("Hi, Trust Me, You Need, Hurry, Buy"), discusses the vocabulary of advertising, and provides exercises, discussion topics, and quiz sheets as learning and assessment tools. (DQE)

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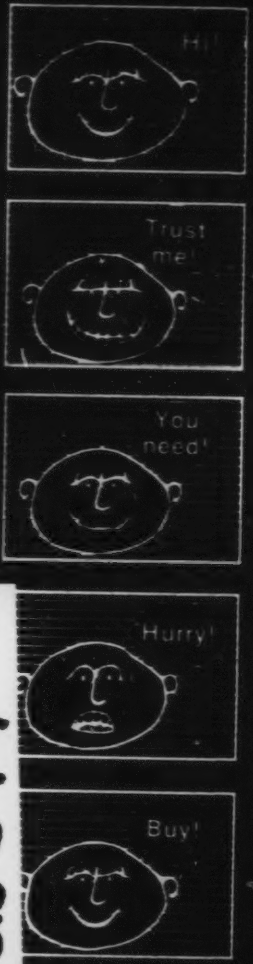
Hi!
Trust me!
You need!
Hurry!
Buy!

THE PITCH

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A SIMPLE 1-2-3-4-5 WAY TO UNDERSTAND THE BASIC PATTERN OF PERSUASION IN ADVERTISING

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HUGH RANK

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THE PITCH

Hugh Rank

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Dedicated to
Elizabeth, Christopher, James-Jonathan, David
my own kids,
and to the generation
now coming of age - -

Be disillusioned, but not discouraged:
Lose your illusions, but not your courage.

Acknowledgments: This book was written by Hugh Rank as part of his work with the **National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Committee on Public Doublespeak**, a teacher's committee organized in 1972 to " propose classroom techniques for preparing students to cope with commercial propaganda." <> Since then, Professor Rank has developed various materials in his course at **Governors State University** (Illinois) where his students have contributed greatly by their responses, comments, and advice. The author gratefully acknowledges the help of his colleagues and students, but claims full responsibility for the ideas and opinions expressed. <> Special thanks go to **Linda Van Dyke**, as editor, and to **Leone Middleton** who helped convert the original Kaypro-2X manuscript to finished quality on the Macintosh-SE. <> **The Counter-Propaganda Press** is an independent small press dedicated to help the average person analyze better the common patterns of persuasion as used today by the sophisticated, organized persuaders, whether commercial or political, Left or Right, domestic or foreign.

> *"I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education."*
>
> \- Thomas Jefferson

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Chapter One

WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

Matching Quiz #1 — SLOGANS

Can you match these advertising slogans with their products?

"Fly the Friendly Skies"
"Quality is Job One"
"The Heartbeat of America"
"Breakfast of Champions"
"M'm! M'm! Good!"
"You've Come a Long Way, Baby."
"The San Francisco Treat"
"The King of Beers"
"Snap, Crackle, and Pop"
"Plop, Plop, Fizz, Fizz"
"Good to the Last Drop"
"Food, Folks, and Fun"
"Melts in Your Mouth, Not in Your Hands"
"Finger Licking Good"
"Don't Leave Home Without It"
"The Good Hands People"
"When You Care Enough to Send the Very Best"
"Double Your Pleasure, Double Your Fun"

United Airline, Ford, Chevrolet, Wheaties, Campbell's Soups, Virginia Slims, Rice-a-Roni, Budweiser, Rice Krispies, Alka Seltzer, Maxwell House, McDonald's, M & M's, Kentucky Fried Chicken, American Express, Allstate, Hallmark, Doublemint.

If you have correctly identified many of the slogans, then — as far as the advertisers are concerned — you've been a good little receiver!

These are the words and phrases, ideas and images, carefully crafted and often repeated, that these advertisers, spending millions of dollars, want us to remember.

You **already know** a great deal about the specifics of ads.

If you're an average young person, growing up in a house with a TV set, you probably saw about 200,000 TV commercials before you went to first grade!

This estimate is based on the Gallup Poll statistics which show that the average American family watches TV more than 7 hours a day. At 20 commercials an hour, that's 140 a day, or about 51,000 a year.

Not only is there an "information explosion" today, but also a "persuasion explosion." In your lifetime, you may see a million or more ads!

You may have watched TV more or less, but, generally speaking, you've already seen a lot of **specific examples** provided by the advertisers. Your memory has a great store of information about these messages.

You already know a great deal about the **surface** of ads: about the slogans and jingles, the logos and brand names, the actors and endorsers. This book will help you understand the implied structure, "hidden" underneath.

This book will show you some **new ways** to look at ads, to help sort them out so you can cut through the clutter of such incoming messages.

This book will show you some **general principles** and **patterns**. But, your active mind has to make the link, applying the general principles here to the specific ads you see.

Such **critical thinking**, applied to analyzing ads, will give you several benefits — as a composer, a consumer, and a citizen. As a **composer**, you can transfer your skills of analysis (the "taking apart" process) into skills of composition (the "putting together" process) when you write or organize things. As a **consumer**, you can save money and protect yourself if you understand how commercial persuasion is put together. As a **citizen** in a democracy, you can participate better if you understand more about how some of these same techniques function in social and political persuasion.

Are ads worth all this attention?

No, but your mind is. If you can better learn how to analyze things, to recognize patterns, to sort out incoming information, to see the parts, the processes, the structure, the relationships within things so common in your everyday environment, then it's worth your effort.

Introductory Exercises

Open Discussion

Class discussions about advertising are lively, exciting, and usually chaotic. Here are two suggestions for "warm up" exercises which allow for great freedom in such random discussions, yet ultimately provide some useful way to sort out ideas. **Before** using this text, teachers can:

Have students write (one per 3x5 card) their **statements** or **questions** about anything related to ads or advertising.

(and/or)

Tape record an "open" class discussion about ads and advertising.

As you read these cards aloud or listen to the tape playback, listen for (1) **expressions of opinions** ("I really like... I hate... that ad, that product, that actor"); (2) **"chunks" of narratives** about specific ads or products ("Did you see that one about..." "I once had a ..."); (3) **questions or statements** about **legality** ("Can they ..."), **morality** ("Should they ..." "They shouldn't..."), **effectiveness** ("Does that ad/product really work?"), **technique** (e.g. computer graphics, trick photography) "How did they do that?" (If you sort out the cards, also create a **"misc."** for any problem cases.) Few, if any, questions will be about the **language** or **rhetorical** techniques.

Assure your students that **all** of the aspects of ads are reasonable ones to consider, but that they will gain insight by looking at ads a new way, using this book focused on **language** and **rhetoric.** (If you're reading this book alone, you may wish to jot down **your** questions before you go on.)

Let's Write an Ad!

Some classrooms use a "creative writing" approach to teach about advertising. At best, this encourages spontaneity and enthusiasm; at worst, this becomes a random imitation of existing ads without grasping principles.

Teachers may wish to use a pre-test/post-test approach, by comparing student ads written **before** and **after** using this book. Note especially how students deal with rhetorical concepts such as structure, target audience, benefits, claims, context; and economic concepts such as market share, cost effectiveness, and demographics.

Chapter Two

ADS AS UNITS OF PERSUASION

Ads are units of persuasion.

Ads are so common in our daily lives that we seldom take them seriously. Most people simply dismiss ads as trivial annoyances or nuisances, as interruptions of "their time" (TV ads) or intrusions into "their space" ("junk mail" and billboards). Every year in a survey conducted by a major ad agency, **most** people (usually 75% - 80%) respond that "advertising doesn't affect me," although they grant that **other** people might be affected. Generally, most people dismiss ads as insignificant and ineffective.

If, however, you see ads as **units of persuasion**, then you'll recognize how important and effective they are in our society and in our individual lives. The purpose of an ad is persuasion: to persuade its target audience **to respond** in some way, **to do something** or **to believe something**, now or later. The first step in analyzing ads is to recognize them as units of persuasion.

Persuasion is a **transaction** between **benefit-promisers** and **benefit-seekers**. (As the song says, "It takes two to tango.") In most cases, there are mutual benefits exchanged: producers get a profit, consumers get a pleasure.

Some critics blame advertisers for many social problems and see consumers as *victims* being deceived by ads. But, if we recognize our own involvement in a transaction, that we are not simply innocent bystanders, that we are "willing watchers," then it will keep us from using advertisers as scapegoats.

This book is not a hatchet-job "against" advertising. Later, the book deals with some problems of deceptive advertising and the hidden harmful effects of ads. Most of the book, however, focuses on the common ordinary everyday ads for good and useful products which offer benefits we want and seek.

Benefit-Seeking

This book's basic premise is that **all people are benefit-seekers**, and that **persuaders are benefit-promisers.** To begin, we need to look at what we mean by **a benefit**, or the **"good."**

Traditionally, philosophers and moralists have struggled trying to define the "good"; more recently, psychologists (such as Maslow) are more likely to be concerned with the definition and classification of various "goods" in terms of human motivation, of human needs and wants. Various observers have developed different definitions, lists, and categories of "goods" that people seek. Often, these concepts are relative (what's "good" for one person may be "bad" for another) and ambiguous. People describe the "good" in different ways. A philosopher may talk in abstract terms about the "good" life ("To me,, the 'good' life is one of integrity, seeking beauty and harmony with nature....") while another person may think in concrete specifics ("To me, the 'good' life is riding my motorcycle....")

Such ambiguities exist in our language. In this book, **quotes** will be used when using the words **"good"** and **"bad"** to suggest that **any** "good" or "bad" — however conceived or defined by a person — can be inserted.

People are benefit-seekers. For survival and growth, we seek after the "good" — as we perceive it. There's so much common agreement to this generalization that it might be dismissed as a "ho-hum" truism — so what!

Once we accept this premise, however, certain **implied relationships** follow. For example, for every "good," there's an opposite "bad" which is either the **contradictory** or the **omission** of the "good." So also, every "good" and "bad" can be described in terms of **degree** — very "good," very "bad," "so-so." Or, that every "good" and "bad" condition has related **causes** and related **effects**; or that every "good" that we seek is related to our **behaviors** (what we do), our **beliefs** (what we think), and our **emotions** (how we feel). Or, consider that every such "good" and "bad" has a whole cluster of relationships associated with it, and that the whole cluster can be triggered in our mind by any of the parts.

One relationship, very useful for the analysis of persuasion, describes our basic behaviors as benefit-seekers in terms of two factors: (1) our **perception** of what is "good" and "bad"' and (2) our **possession** — that is, whether we **have** it, or do **not have** it.

	"good"	**"bad"**
"have"	**PROTECTION** keep the "good"	**RELIEF** get rid of the "bad"
"have not"	**ACQUISITION** get the "good"	**PREVENTION** avoid the "bad"

Using these two factors, a grid chart can sub-divide the basic premise (all people are benefit-seekers) to illustrate the dynamics of our benefit-seeking behaviors so that we see ads in a new way. This chart reads:

Protection: If people have a "good," they want to **keep** it.
Relief: If people have a "bad," they want to **get rid of** it.
Acquisition: If people have not a "good," they want to **get** it.
Prevention: If people have not a "bad," they want to **avoid** it.

> People seek benefits which can be usefully described in terms of four major categories: **protection** and **prevention, acquisition** and **relief.** The next four pages explain each of these in greater detail and give examples of what kind of ads and products to expect in each category. ☛ ☛ ☛ ☛ ☛ ☛ ☛ ☛ ☛

All of these four aspects exist **at the same time,** but ads usually emphasize one, or **explicitly** state one, while the others are **implicitly** suggested. Commonly, two aspects are **paired**: acquisition-and-relief, or, protection-and-prevention. Sometimes, ads will say "buy this and save money" (get a "good" and keep a "good"), a seeming paradox which urges us to save money by spending it. But, this is usually explainable by the assumptions and unspoken qualifications: "you'll save money *in the long run* by buying this *now.*"

"Feel good" ads. Many ads emphasize the **intangibles,** the **emotional benefits** — the "good feelings" or "warm fuzzies" — we may receive when we buy a product. For example, ads for certain "protection" products often emphasize a sense of duty and satisfaction in being a good "caretaker" — a good mother, or a proud homeowner, or a concerned pet owner. Ads for "prevention" products emphasize a sense of security. Ads for "relief" of suffering often suggest a sense of hope; many placebos "work" because of this. Many kinds of "acquisitions" are sold because of these intangibles, these "added values." People buy products to "look good" and "show off"-- for a sense of being beautiful or successful, of being admired or esteemed by others. Clothes are often bought for style or display, to attract or to impress others, not simply for practical purposes. Ads for long-distance phone service stress "feelings" (love, family, caring, bonding — "keep in touch"), not information-transfer!

Categorize, but don't try to pigeonhole an ad into one category, or use this chart as an inflexible straight jacket in analyzing ads. Things may be in several categories at the same time. Observers can disagree about which is the "most important" or "most noticeable" category. Most commonly, we can quickly get a **dominant impression.**

Ads and products can be categorized in many ways,* but, this four-part division is a very useful way for us to become more alert to the **transaction** involved, and to our own **benefit-seeking.**

**Advertising Age*, for example, in listing the "Top 10" money-spenders at the start of the 1990's, used these 10 ad categories: automotive, foods, restaurants, retail/nonfood, pharmaceuticals/drugs, toiletries/cosmetics, telephone, movies, airline, and beer.

PROTECTION

If people have a "good," they want to keep it.

Some persuasion appeals primarily to our human desire to protect or safeguard the "goods" we already have. Many products and services are sold as a **means** to protect our possessions: for example, to maintain or to take care of our clothes, our cars, and our homes.

Products and services related to "protection" benefits include: **cleansers** (soaps and detergents); **lubricants** (waxes, oils); **maintenance services** (car tune-ups, brakes, mufflers, lawn care); **home repairs and improvements** (carpentry, plumbing, painting) and the related tools, appliances, and products used (paint, faucets, replacement windows, carpeting, roofing, siding, insulation, furnaces, air conditioners, water heaters, refrigerators, washers, dryers). **Pet foods and supplies** are sold so that owners can **take care of** their pets. Some **cosmetics** (oils and lotions for skin care and hair care) and various **food packaging** products (plastic and foil wraps, bags) stress protection. So also do some conservative **financial investments** (savings accounts, bonds, certificates of deposit) designed to protect the assets of those investors who already **have** surplus money. Many business products and services (phone services, package delivery services, computers, fax and copy machines) stress their value as a means **to hold on to** customers and **to keep up with** competitors.

The **"Haves"** are the target audience: home owners and "homemakers," car owners, pet owners, property owners, business owners and managers. Thus, ads stressing **care** and **maintenance** are usually geared at an **older** audience of adults, and are likely to be seen in certain contexts with a high percentage of that audience. "Soap operas," for example, were originally the daytime radio and TV programs, sponsored by the various laundry soaps, designed for an audience of "homemakers." Sports programs, with a predominantly male audience, have many ads for home repairs, tools, and lawn care. Protection ads often stress the emotional feelings of pride of ownership, security, satisfaction, contentment, and joy which result from "doing a good job" in taking care of the possessions.

Verbs commonly used — or implied — in such ads: ***keep, save, protect, maintain, take care of, guard, safeguard, own, retain, hold, support, sustain, uphold, endure, last longer.***

RELIEF

If people have a "bad," they want to get rid of it.

Some persuasion appeals to our human desire for relief, or change, if we have a "bad." The **kinds** of pains or problems will vary, and the **degrees** of intensity. For example, people can seek relief from relatively minor annoyances and inconveniences (using aspirins for headaches, adhesives for slipping false teeth, repellents for insects, deodorants for smells) or from **major** problems, serious life-or-death issues.

Products and services related to "relief" benefits include: over-the-counter drugs — **OTC drugs** — or "patent medicines," **diets** and weight-loss programs, *financial* **relief plans**; **self-improvement plans** (such as muscle-building), most of which stress the "bad" (of the "Before" condition) and promise relief ("After" buying). Medicine ads have received the most attention from federal regulators because people in pain are a very **vulnerable** audience. People who have a fatal disease (AIDS, cancer) will often try anything which offers relief or hope, because they are so desperate. Thus, they may fall victim to a cruel exploitation by frauds who sell "cures." In the 19th century, such "quacks" and "medicine shows" were common until laws were enacted. Such **hard-core frauds** are seldom seen today on television, but still exist in fly-by-night mail order schemes and in personal "con games," both of which are very hard to police.

Borderline problems, however, still exist, with ads for many OTC drugs such as aspirins and cough syrups. OTC drugs are often "**parity products**" (with basically the same ingredients) making questionable claims about "**marginal differences**" (color, coating, size, packaging, efficacy, speed). Complex legal suits frequently occur as regulators try to police the industry from making deceptive claims. The FDA, for instance, requires certain **qualifying words** ("helps... may relieve..."); the FTC restricts certain TV **techniques** , such as white-coated "doctors" endorsing products. But, as soon as one regulation is made, the drug companies seem to find a loophole. Thus, instead of white-coated "doctors," the ads will display men in blue dress suits, solemnly standing in front of a library of medical textbooks, again looking like "doctors" endorsing the product.

Target audiences for "relief" ads include not only the sufferers, but also the "**caretakers**" within a family, usually the mothers who take care of both children and the elderly. OTC drug ads are seen constantly on TV, not only for the few who need **immediate** aid, but also for the **future** reference of the many. Such constant advertising has been effective. Most people today, when they go to the drugstore, buy the advertised brands rather than the same drug in generic or house brands. Critics charge that we have become a drug-oriented society, seeking instant relief for all ills with a pill.

Verbs commonly used — or implied— in such ads are: ***change, relieve, reduce, stop, cure, expel, eliminate, escape, eject, reject, fight, struggle, abandon, destroy, get rid of.*** **Qualifiers** are often required by law (FDA, FTC regulations): ***may relieve, helps to, aids in, partial relief, relieves the symptoms of, in some cases.***

ACQUISITION

If people have not a "good," they want to get it.

Most ads, in an affluent society, simply emphasize acquisition. There are so many consumer goods available, and so many different stores and sellers. Our desires can be so unlimited that advertisers simply try to persuade us that theirs is a "good" which deserves high priority on our list of wants. In contrast to "protection" products, which stress care and maintenance, many of these "acquisition" ads simply urge us to use up, to **consume.**

Products and services related to "acquisition" benefits include: **clothes** (sneakers, jeans, hosiery, jewelry); **cosmetics** (perfume, lipstick, makeup, beauty aids, perms); **foods** (cereals, candy, snacks, soft drinks, beer, fast-food restaurants, convenience foods — microwave and frozen dinners); **throw-away products** (plastics, paper plates, disposable diapers), **alcohol** (beer, wine, liquor); **cigarettes; vehicles;** (cars, motorcycles, bikes); **home furnishings** (furniture, antiques, decorations, arts and crafts, collectibles), **electronics** (TV, VCRs, stereos, cassette players, camcorders, computers), **toys and games; books and magazines; cameras and film; entertainments** (movies, videos, CDs, videogames, concerts, sports events, amusement parks, night clubs, fairs, races); **phone services;** (900 & 976-Talk-Lines); **pleasure travel** (tours, cruises, hotels, resorts, tourist locales, airline tickets); **lottery tickets**. Various **"career"** ads (trade schools, colleges, military recruiting) stress **future** benefits to those who enroll. Various **"success"** ads (home jobs, franchises, get-rich-quick schemes) stress **future** wealth or business opportunities.

Some services are a **means** to the end of acquisition. For example, local retail stores and shopping malls run many ads, competing to bring buyers to their specific store. **Credit cards** (VISA, MC) offer a **means** to acquire goods, *instantly or conveniently;* ads encouraging credit card use stress these features, not their high interest cost. Some holiday and gift-giving occasions (Christmas, Mother's Day, birthdays, weddings, proms) are often promoted ("get in the spirit") by special interest groups, such as florists, jewelers, formal wear, greeting card makers, and phone services.

Verbs commonly used — or implied — in such ads include: ***buy, get, use, try, enjoy, select, choose, purchase, obtain***; verbs appropriate to specific products, such as: ***taste, drink, eat, smoke, wear, see, hear, listen to, feel, experience, shop at, go to, come to, stay at, play with, travel on, drive, fly, ride.***

PREVENTION

If people have not a "bad," they want to avoid it.

Some persuasion appeals to our human desire to stay out of harm's way, to stay out of trouble, to steer clear of conditions and situations which are potentially dangerous, unpleasant, or inconvenient. Caution in advance, **precaution**, is a reasonable attitude in some situations because life has genuine dangers and real problems. "*Praemunitas, praemonitas.*" Forewarned is forearmed.

Products and services related to "prevention" benefits include: **automobile** parts (tires, batteries, brakes); **security devices** (locks, alarms, fences, safe deposit boxes, vaults) **travelers checks**; **insurance** (home, fire, car); **preventative medicines** (vitamins, suntan lotions); **health clubs**; **contraceptives**; **savings accounts** ("saving for a rainy day"); **guidebooks** ("Where to") and **instructionals** ("How to") which prepare us for strange areas or situations. Sometimes food, clothing, and home repairs are linked with **seasonal warnings** about "getting ready for" the bad conditions of winter or summer.

"Scare-and-sell" advertising is a term used in this book to describe ads in both the categories of **relief** ("get rid of the bad") and **prevention** ("avoid the bad") because so many use a similar pattern of **problem/solution:** a problem will be presented, then the product offered as a solution. (Scholars call this "anxiety arousal and satisfaction.") Such ads often show dramatized scenes of **"horror stories"** (accidents, fires, tire blow-outs, stalls on lonely roads, burglars) followed by the products' claim to prevent or relieve the problem. Such ads often serve a very good purpose to alert us to fix our brakes, check our tires, and so on. However, "warnings" are often abused by persuaders who know that they stir up deep emotional feelings of fear and anxiety. Such **"scare tactics"** are often used, not only in commercial advertising, but also in religious and political persuasion.

Urgency appeals (*"now or never," "before it's too late," "last chance"*) are often used to give a sense of crisis. Intensity is heightened: the greater the problem, the more the need for a solution. When such persuasion is too intense, or not credible, or not about **our** problem (dirty floors, bad breath), we notice it, and may be annoyed. Although some "scare-and-sell" ads are very obvious (tire blow-outs), others are more subtle. For example, many vague teen-age fears and anxieties about not being popular, or not being pretty, are exploited by advertisers who suggest that if you don't use their products (jeans, sneakers, fashions, toys), you won't be "in." In some ads, the non-users in the background of such ads are the "nerds." **Peer-pressure** is often a matter of "avoiding the bad" of being left out of the group.

Verbs commonly used — or implied — in such ads include: ***avoid, prevent, prepare, get ready,, take care, be careful, resist, retard, slow down, stop, exclude, block, prohibit, deny, shut out, keep out, don't let, don't allow.***

Target Audience

Ads are usually directed not at "everyone," but at specific target audiences, smaller parts of the huge mass media audience. Because TV **seems** so personal, it's often hard to visualize the millions of others who are watching. When young children get annoyed at "stupid ads," it's usually one of two things: they don't understand the **non-rational** means of persuasion (discussed later); or, because kids are so ego-centered, self-centered, they don't realize that they are **not** the **target audience** of many ads.

Ask yourself, when you see an ad, are you the "target audience"?

If not, as part of an unintended "spillover" audience, are you **uninterested** or **hostile** toward the ad? Do you ignore it, or does it bother you?

In most cases, people usually have a **selective focus** and don't pay much attention to ads which don't concern them, or which don't involve their existing needs or wants at that time. But, advertising goes on all of the time, and so do the various manufacturing industries. Personally, we may not need an aspirin, a muffler, or a gallon of paint, but somewhere, today, millions of other people do, and thousands of factories are making them.

Target audience considerations are very important in **attention-getting** (to place ads in the right context, with the right appeals) and in **confidence-building** (because audiences respond differently to authority figures and friend figures). Yet, target audience considerations may be most important when the main strategy of an ad is to **associate** the product with such **intangibles** as a sense of esteem, success, love, or belonging.

The association technique basically links three elements together: (1) the **product**, with (2) **something already held favorably by, or desired by** (3) the **intended audience**.

Thus, persuaders must first identify their target audience and find out what it already likes and dislikes. Expository writers, seeking to connect with their intended audience, are always interested in "common knowledge" — in what their audience already **knows**. Persuaders are more interested in what their target audience already **feels**.

Linking specific products and specific target audiences together is one of the major concerns in advertising. Under a variety of names, such as **"market research"** and "consumer behavior research," the advertising industry spends billions of dollars to locate, identify, and analyze the audiences for their ads. The basic principle is simple enough: advertisers seek cost-effectiveness. At the lowest cost, they want to reach and persuade the largest possible audience of potential buyers.

Ads as Business Transactions

Sellers in this business transaction need to be cost-effective. That is, they must bring in much more money than the advertising costs. A major soap manufacturer, for example, will budget a certain percentage of its total costs for advertising. Proctor & Gamble, for example, may spend millions, producing thousands of different ads, for dozens of its various brands. Effectiveness is usually measured in slight degrees. If one of the competing laundry detergents, for example, can increase its "market share" of the huge national market simply from 2% to 3%, it may mean millions of dollars of profit for the company.

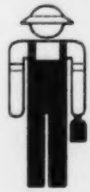
Although any one specific ad may "fail" or seem to be ineffective, the ad **campaign** — as a whole — has to sell the products and also stay within budget. If the ad campaign isn't effective, the manufacturing companies will hire new ad agencies. Costs are carefully watched by everyone to make sure that the ad campaigns are doing the job effectively. It's a very expensive game of "musical chairs" which goes on constantly as ad agencies get dumped when they don't produce results for their clients.

Advertising is intended **to sell** products and services. While some ads are designed primarily as "attention-getters" or "image-builders" (discussed in later chapters), these are usually only a small part of a much larger advertising campaign. While the "creative people" within an ad agency may produce many entertaining or interesting ads, such aspects are designed to lead us, ultimately, to buy the product: a **means** to an end. Sometimes an ineffective, but unusual, ad may win an "artistic" or "creativity" award, usually from some artsy group. However, ads which don't help increase sales are seldom seen again. The sellers are much aware of the need for their advertising to be a cost-effective business transaction.

Buyers in this transaction — the consumers — also need to be cost-effective: to get the best value for their money, and to stay within their budget, their limits. However, many consumers are untrained, undisciplined, and greedy. Lured by persuasive ads and easy credit — which obscures their financial limits — many people spend too much, exceed their limits, and go into debt. **Consumer education** programs can provide helpful information to buyers, but such attitude problems also involve issues of common sense and personal ethics.

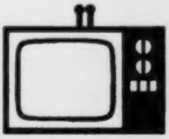
The Business of Advertising

Money for advertising comes from the manufacturer as one part of its overall production cost. For example, XYZ Automakers may budget an annual $100 million to advertise. (Each **buyer** ultimately pays a portion of that cost; the actual percentage varies with different kinds of products.)



Manufacturers have a person (or an ad department) who selects an **ad agency** from among the many available (5,000+ in the USA) competing for the account. That agency gets a percentage, usually 15%, for its work in creating the ad campaign. From its share, the agency must pay its production costs of making the ad: artists, writers, photographers, researchers, and overhead staff.

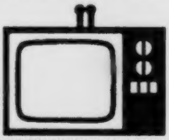
Ad agency planners, based on their demographic research, will then direct the remaining 85% to place the ads: to buy **time** (TV, radio) and **space** (newspapers, magazines, billboards, direct mail) from the various media companies. The ad agency seeks to get cost-effectiveness: to get the largest potential buying audience at the lowest cost. Nobody knows, for certain, about the size or make-up of the mass-media audiences. Therefore, many independent **research** companies (such as the Nielsen TV ratings,) exist in the ad industry and use a variety of ways trying to measure the size and kind of audiences. Ad campaigns usually **mix** many different media.



Media companies (TV networks, magazines, newspapers, billboards, cable,Channel One), based on their demographic research, will try to persuade ad agencies to put that money into their media, claiming that they are the most cost-effective for that particular product or audience. "Advertise here," they say, "because we can **deliver the audience** for that product at the lowest price." To attract the largest audiences (or the most cost-efficient ones), the **media companies** buy the programs which people want to watch.

Program producers, today, not only include the various "Hollywood" companies which make movies, sit-coms, dramatic series, game shows and interview programs, but also the various professional and college sports which now have TV contracts. All produce entertainments which are being used today by the media to "deliver audiences" to advertisers.

In very recent years, as the producers and team-owners have received more money from the networks, the individual movie stars and athletes have demanded greater salaries. Millions of dollars are now being paid to such entertainers whose major function today is to lure people to their TV sets, so that they become audiences for the media to sell to advertisers.



TV ads (these scorned and abused little "**30-second spots**") are now the driving force, creating a totally new situation in the movies and sports, and in the wider American culture. No one knows what the limits are, nor what the future will bring, in this intricate, inter-related system.

EXERCISES

Categorization Exercises

1. Observe a series of ads on television or in a magazine. Place each ad into one of these four general categories: protection, relief, acquisition, prevention.

   Is there a "dominant impression" which might describe most of these ads?

   Can some ads be seen in more than one category at once?

   Can observers — because of their different focus and interest - disagree as to which category may be the "most" obvious, relevant, or important?

2. Make a list of things you've recently purchased, or a "wish list" of possible future purchases. Categorize these items into these four general categories. Consider *degree*, the amount of money, time, or attention to various kinds of things. Note any omissions.

Inference Exercises

1. Observe an ad. Who is the target audience?

   Do you base your inference on clues from the **context** in which it appears? For example: a sports magazine, a rock radio station, the evening news, or a Saturday morning cartoon program.

   Or, are there clues **within** the ad, such as the presenters, the back ground scenes, or the product itself?

   In the case of a product (e.g. food, automobile) which can be used by many different kinds of people, does this particular ad seem to target a smaller segment of that whole general audience?

2. Observe the context of ads. Using a VCR to make separate videotapes, collect and record ads at different times (Saturday morning kids show, early afternoon "soaps," evening news, and "prime time" 7-10pm) or on different networks or cable channels (MTV, ESPN, PBS). What inferences can you make about the differences in their target audiences? If you live near a big city, with multiple radio stations, how do they differ? Compare the ads in a variety of "general" and "special interest" magazines.

3. If you created an ad to sell (a product or service), who would be your target audience? What media would you use to reach that audience?

4. Watch the ads on the Public Broadcasting System (PBS). How do they differ from "regular" ads on the commercial networks? Why are they there?

In brief: Ads are **units of persuasion.** Persuasion is a **transaction** between **benefit-promisers** and **benefit-seekers.** People seek benefits which can be described in terms of four major categories: **protection** and **prevention, acquisition** and **relief.** Ads are usually directed not at "everyone," but at specific **target audiences.** Furthermore, ads are **business transactions** which should be cost-effective.

Chapter Three

PERSUADERS AS BENEFIT-PROMISERS

The previous chapter focused on our **benefit-seeking** behaviors. Another way to understand ads is to focus on the **benefit-promising** behaviors of the persuader.

Whenever people act in the role of a persuader (advertisers, political, or anyone), expect them to **intensify their own "good"** and **downplay their own "bad."**. Sometimes, in aggressive situations, people will also intensify others "bad" and downplay others "good."

To help understand this process, consider the simple model presented here: the **Intensify/Downplay schema,** which gives a useful overview showing that the most common means to intensify something are by **repetition, association,** and **composition,** and the most common means to downplay something are by **omission, diversion,** and **confusion.**

In the next chapter, **"The "30-Second Spot Quiz"** is presented as a useful and easy way to focus on the basic pattern in ads. This teaching aid gives an easy-to-remember 1-2-3-4-5 "fingertip formula," a useful lifelong tool for analyzing ads.

All of these teaching aids are simply tools for you to use. By analogy, we need many different tools in a toolbox, appropriate for different purposes and situations.

For example, a very simple bumper-sticker ad ("Jones for Governor") used in an election campaign, might be analyzed using the **Intensify/Downplay schema** in terms of "repetition" (simple techniques, name-recognition, saturation effect, and so on); or, using the **"30-Second Spot Quiz,"** analyzed in terms of being an "attention-getter" in the wider context of a campaign in which, elsewhere, the candidate builds an "image," makes claims and promises, implicitly seeking a response ("vote").

The **Intensify/Downplay schema** has an advantage of being a comprehensive overview, a flexible structure adaptable to many approaches and interests. The schema helps you to orient yourself, to get a sense of where the parts fit into a larger whole. For example, you might focus on "metaphors" one time and "omissions" another time, yet remain aware of your other options.

Questions You Can Ask About Advertising is a collection of over 200 "prompter questions" based on the pattern of the Intensify/Downplay schema. You may not be interested in following up all of these possible ways to analyze ads, but you can get a sense of the whole.

INTENSIFY

Repetition

Intensifying by repetition is an easy, simple, and effective way to persuade. People are comfortable with the known, the familiar. As children, we love to hear the same stories repeated; later, we have "favorite" songs, TV programs, etc. All cultures have chants, prayers, rituals dances based on repetition to imprint on the memory of the receiver to identify, recognize, and respond.

Association

People intensify by linking (1) **the idea or product** with (2) **something already loved/desired by - or hated/feared by** (3) **the intended audience**. Thus, there is the need for **audience analysis**: surveys, polls, "market research," "consumer behavior," psychological and sociological studies. Association can be done by direct assertions, or indirect ways: metaphoric language, allusions, backgrounds, and contexts. Some "good things" often linked with products are those common human needs/wants/desires for "basics," "certitude," "intimacy," "space," and "growth."

Composition

Intensifying by pattern and arrangement uses design, variations in sequence and in proportion to add to the force of words, images, and movements. How we put together, or compose, is important: e.g. in **verbal** communication: the choice of words, their level of abstraction, their patterns within sentences, the strategy of longer messages. Logic, inductive and deductive, puts ideas together systematically. **Non-verbal** compositions involve visuals (color, shape, size); aural (music); mathematics (quantities, relationships), time and space patterns.

The **Intensify/Downplay** schema is a pattern useful to analyze communication, persuasion and propaganda. All people **intensify** (commonly by repetition, association, composition) and **downplay** (commonly by omission, diversion, confusion) as they communicate in words, gestures, and numbers. But, "professional persuaders" have more training, technology, money and media access than the average citizen. Individuals can better cope with organized persuasion by recognizing the common ways how communication is intensified or downplayed, and by considering **who** is saying **what** to **whom**, **when** and **where**, with what **intent** and what **result**.

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DOWNPLAY

Omission

Downplaying by omission is common since the basic selection/omission process necessarily omits more than can be presented. All communication is limited, is slanted or biased to include and exclude items. But omission can also be used as a deliberate way of concealing. Half-truths and quotes out of context are very hard to detect. Political examples include cover-ups, censorship, book-burning, and managed news. Receivers, too, can omit: can "filter out" or be closed minded or prejudiced.

Diversion

People downplay by distracting focus or diverting attention away from key issues or important things; usually by intensifying the side-issues, the non-related, the trivial. Common variations of diversionary tactics include: "hair-splitting," "nit-picking," "attacking a straw man," "red herring"; and emotional attacks (*ad hominem, ad populum*), plus things which drain the energy of others: "busy work," "legal harassment." Humor and entertainment ("bread and circuses") are used as pleasant ways to divert attention from major issues.

Confusion

People also downplay issues by making things so complex, so chaotic, that other people "give up," get weary, or "overloaded." This is dangerous when people are unable to understand or make reasonable decisions. Chaos can be the *accidental* result of a disorganized mind, or the *deliberate* flim-flam of a con man or the political demagogue who then offers a "simple solution" to the confused. Confusion can result from faulty logic, equivocation, circumlocution, contradictions, multiple diversions, inconsistencies, jargon or anything which blurs clarity or understanding.

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QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK ABOUT ADVERTISING

Ads INTENSIFY the "good" by means of repetition, association, composition

Repetition

How often have you seen the ad? On TV? In print? Do you recognize the **brand name? trademark? logo? company? package**? What key words or images repeated within ad? Any repetition patterns (alliteration, anaphora, rhyme) used? Any **slogan?** Can you hum or sing the **musical theme** or **jingle?** How long has this ad been running? How old were you when you first heard it? (For information on frequency, duration, and costs of ad campaigns, see *Adv. Age.*)

Association

What "**good things**" -already loved or desired by the intended audience -are associated with the product? Any links with basic needs (food, activity, sex, security)? With an appeal to save or gain money? With desire for certitude or outside approval (from religion, science, or the "best," "most," or "average" people)? With desire for a sense of space (neighborhood, nation, nature)? With desire for love and belonging (intimacy, family, groups)? With other human desires (esteem, play, generosity, curiosity, creativity, completion)? Are "**bad things**:" -things already hated or feared -stressed, as in a "**scare-and-sell**" ad? Are problems presented, with products as solutions? Are the speakers (models, endorsers) **authority figures**: people you respect, admire? Or **friend figures**: people you'd like as friends, identify with, or would like to be?

Composition

Look for the basic strategy of "the pitch": HI... TRUST ME... YOU NEED... HURRY... BUY. What are the **attention-getting (HI)** words, images, devices? What are the **confidence-building (TRUST ME)** techniques: words, images, smiles, endorsers, brand names? Is the main **desire-stimulation (YOU NEED)** appeal focused on our benefit-seeking to get or to keep a "good," or to avoid or to get rid of a "bad"? **"Are you the target audience"**? If not, who is? Are you part of an unintended audience? When and where did the ads appear? Are **product claims** made for: superiority, quantity, beauty, efficiency, scarcity, novelty, stability, reliability, simplicity, utility, rapidity, or safety? Are any **"added values"** suggested or implied by using any of the association techniques (see above)? Is there any **urgency-stressing (HURRY)** by words, movement, pace? Or is a "soft sell" conditioning for later purchase? Are there specific **response-triggering** words **(BUY)**: to buy, to do, to call? Or is it conditioning (image building or public relations) to make us "feel good" about the company, to get favorable public opinion on its side (against government regulations, laws, taxes)? **Persuaders seek some kind of response**!

Ads DOWNPLAY the "bad" by means of omission, diversion, confusion

Omission

What "bad" aspects, disadvantages, drawbacks, hazards, have been **omitted** from the ad? Are there some unspoken assumptions? An un-said story? Are some things implied or suggested, but not explicitly stated? Are there concealed problems concerning the **maker**, the **materials**, the **design**, the **use**, or the **purpose of the product**? **Are there any unwanted or harmful side effects**: unsafe, unhealthy, uneconomical, inefficient, unneeded? Does any **"disclosure law"** exist (or is needed) requiring public warning about a concealed hazard? In the ad, what gets less time, less attention, smaller print? (Most ads are true, but incomplete.)

Diversion

What benefits (low cost, high speed, etc.) get high priority in the ad's claim and promises? Are these **your** priorities? Significant, important to you? Is there any **"bait-and-switch"**? (Ad stresses low cost, but the actual seller switches buyer's priority to high quality.) Does ad divert focus from **key issues**, important things (e.g. nutrition, health, safety)? Does ad focus on **side-issues**, unmeaningful trivia (common in parity products)? Does ad divert attention from your other choices, other options: buy something else, use less, use less often, rent, borrow, share, do without? (Ads need not show other choices, but you should know them.)

Confusion

Are the words clear or ambiguous? Specific or vague? Are claims and promises absolute, or are there qualifying words ("may help," "some")? Is the claim measurable? Or is it **"puffery"**? (Laws permit most "seller's talk" of such general praise and subjective opinions.) Are the words common, understandable, familiar? Uncommon? Jargon? Any parts difficult to "translate" or explain to others? Are analogies clear? Are comparisons within the same kind? Are examples related? Typical? Adequate? Enough examples? Any contradictions? Inconsistencies? Errors? Are there frequent changes, variations, revisions (in size, price, options, extras, contents, packaging)? Is it too complex: too much, too many? Disorganized? Incoherent? Unsorted? Any confusing statistics? Numbers? Do you know exact costs? Benefits? Risks?

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Exercises

Apply the "Questions" on page 20 to specific ads. For example:

1. Observe a 30 second spot (or a magazine ad) and focus on **repetition.** Identify any repeated claims — key words or phrasing, or brand names, or visual images.
2. Identify any favorable **associations** of "good things" with the product.
3. Look for a TV spot with many different scenes in it. Focus on the **composition**: how the parts are put together. Count the number of scenes, of separate shots. Note the camera angles, backgrounds. Count the words used.
4. **Omissions** are difficult to find. Try the suggested questions on page 21 to help your search. Later, after reading the Omissions chapter (pp. 119-128), you may be more adept. But, remember it's always easier to identify what ads intensify than what they downplay.

Chapter Four

THE 30-SECOND SPOT QUIZ

"The pitch" is a slang term, long used in America, variously defined as "a set talk designed to persuade" (American Heritage Dictionary); "an often high-pressured sales talk; advertisement" (Webster's New Collegiate); "a line of talk, such as a salesman uses to persuade customers" (Webster's New World).

Now, "the pitch" is used here to describe a **basic pattern** of advertising, a five-part strategy described here in a **1-2-3-4-5 "fingertip formula"**-- **Hi, Trust Me, You Need, Hurry, Buy** — easy to memorize, simple to apply, even to *non-rational* persuasion, yet accurate and elegant.

Some people will recognize that the pattern of "the pitch" is akin to the traditional pattern emphasizing *rational* persuasion: the classical oration (exordium, narration, confirmation, refutation, peroration). Other analyses (such as Monroe's "Motivated Sequence") and other formulas (such as AIDA) have focused on the patterns of persuasion in advertising. But, none are as complete and systematic, nor designed for the receivers of the messages -the average citizen and consumer.

Qualifications will be made (for example: not all ads use an urgency plea) and variations will be shown throughout the book. But, recognize that this very useful pattern forms the basic framework, or superstructure, of this book (in the next five chapters) and that it is also the structure of the little teaching aid in this chapter (complete with cartoon balloons) called the **30-Second Spot Quiz.**

The 30-Second Spot Quiz is a teaching aid, designed to be photocopied, which has been widely distributed as a one-page freebie and has also been reprinted in other textbooks as a two-page spread, as it appears here.

For many people, the overview provided by the 30-Second Spot Quiz may be the **best starting point** and the **simplest introduction** to understand ads and their predictable patterns. After this overview, the next five chapters will explain and illustrate each of the parts more fully.

1 What ATTENTION-GETTING techniques are used?

Anything unusual? Unexpected? Noticeable? Interesting? Related to:

☐ **senses:** motions, colors, lights, sounds, music, visuals (e.g., computer graphics, slow-motion)
☐ **emotions:**any associations? (see list below): sex, scenery, exciting action, fun, family, pets.
☐ **thought:** news, lists, displays, claims, advice, questions, stories, demonstrations, contests.

(Popular TV **programs** function as attention-getters to **"deliver the audience."**)

2 What CONFIDENCE-BUILDING techniques are used?

☐ Do you recognize, know (from earlier repetition) the **brand name? company? symbol? package?**
☐ Do you already know, like, and trust the **"presenters"**: the endorsers, actors, models?
☐ Are these "presenters" **AUTHORITY FIGURES** (expert, wise, protective, caring,)? Or, are they **FRIEND FIGURES** (someone you like, like to be, "on your side"; including "cute" cartoons)?
☐ What key **words** are used? (Trust, sincere, etc.) **Nonverbals**? (smiles, voice tones, sincere look)
☐ In **mail** ads, are computer-written "personalized" touches used? On **the telephone**: tapes? scripts?

3 What DESIRE-STIMULATING techniques are used?

Consider (a) **"target audience"** as (b) **benefit-seeking**; and persuaders' **benefit-promising** strategies as focused on (c) **product claims**, or (d) **"added values,"** the intangibles associated with a product.

☐ a. **Who is the "target audience"**? Are you? (If not, as part of an unintended audience, are you uninterested or hostile toward the ad?)

☐ b. **What's the primary motive of that audience's benefit seeking**?

Use chart at right. Most ads are simple acquisition (lower left). Often, such motives co-exist, but one may be dominant. Ads which intensify a **problem**, (that is, a "bad" already hated or feared; the opposite, or the absence of, "goods") and then offer the product as a **solution**, are here called **"scare-and-sell"** ads. (right side).

To keep a "good" (protection)	**To get rid of a "bad" (relief)**
To get a "good" (acquisition)	**To avoid a "bad" (prevention)**

☐ c. **What kinds of product claims are emphasized?** (use these 12 categories) what key words, images? Any measurable claims? Or are they subjective opinions, generalized praise words ("puffery")?

SUPERIORITY ("best")
QUANTITY ("most")
EFFICIENCY ("works")
BEAUTY ("lovely")
SCARCITY ("rare")
NOVELTY ("new")

STABILITY ("classic")
RELIABILITY ("solid")
SIMPLICITY ("easy")
UTILITY ("practical")
RAPIDITY ("fast")
SAFETY ("safe")

☐ d. **Are any "added values" implied or suggested?** Are there words or images which associate the product with some "good" already loved or desired by the intended audience? With such common human needs/wants/desires as in these 24 categories:

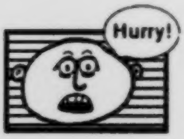
"basic" needs:
FOOD ("tasty")
ACTIVITY ("exciting")
SURROUNDINGS ("comfort")
SEX ("alluring")
HEALTH ("healthy")
SECURITY ("protect")
ECONOMY ("save")

"certitude" needs:
RELIGION ("right")
SCIENCE ("research")
BEST PEOPLE ("elite")
MOST PEOPLE ("popular")
AVERAGE PEOPLE ("typical")

"territory" needs:
NEIGHBORHOOD ("hometown")
NATION ("country")
NATURE ("earth")

love and belonging needs:
INTIMACY ("lover")
FAMILY ("Mom" "kids")
GROUPS ("team")

"growth" needs"
ESTEEM ("respected")
PLAY ("fun")
GENEROSITY ("gift")
CURIOSITY ("discover")
COMPLETION ("success")

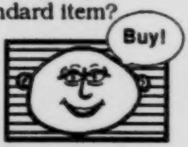


4 **Are there URGENCY-STRESSING techniques used?**

(*Not all ads: but always check.*)

☐ If an urgency appeal: What words? (e.g. Hurry, Rush, Deadline, Sale Ends, Offer Expires, Now.)

☐ If **no** urgency: is this **"soft sell"** part of a repetitive, long-term ad campaign for standard item?



5 **What RESPONSE-SEEKING techniques are used?**

(*Persuaders always seek some kind of response!*)

☐ Are there specific triggering words used? (Buy, Get, Do, Call, Act, Join, Smoke, Drink, Taste)

☐ Is there a **specific response** sought? (Most ads: to buy something)

☐ If **not**: is it **conditioning** ("public relations" or "image building") to make us **"feel good"** about the company, to get favorable public opinion on its side (against any government regulations, taxes)?

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PRACTICAL HINTS FOR ANALYZING ADS:

- Recognize that a 30-second spot TV ad is a **synthesis**, the end product of a complex process in which scores of people (writers, researchers, psychologists, artists, camera crews, and so on) may have spent months putting together the details.

- Be patient and systematic. Analysis takes time to sort out all of the things going on at once. We perceive these things **simultaneously**, but must discuss them **sequentially.** Use the 1-2-3-4-5 pattern of "the pitch" as a useful sequential pattern to organize your analysis and to aid your memory as you observe.

- Recognize "**surface variations**": in 30 seconds, a TV spot may have 40 quick-cut scenes of "good times" (happy people, sports fun, drinking cola); or 1 slow "tracking" scene of an old-fashioned sleigh ride through the woods, ending at home with "Season's Greetings" from some aerospace company; or a three-scene drama: a problem suffered by some "friend," a product/solution offered by a trusted "authority," and a final grateful smile from the relieved sufferer. But, the structure underneath is basically the same "pitch."

- Seek "**dominant impressions**." You can't analyze everything. Focus on what seems (to you) the most noticeable, interesting, or significant elements: for example, an intense "urgency" plea, or a strong "authority" figure. By relating your intuitive "dominant impression" to the overall pattern of "the pitch," your analysis can be systematic, yet flexible and appropriate to the situation.

- **Observe closely** what is explicitly said or shown; consider carefully what may be implied, suggested either by verbal or nonverbal means. Translate "indirect" messages. Much communication is indirect, or implied through metaphoric language, allusions, rhetorical questions, irony, nonverbals (gestures, facial expressions, voice tone), and visuals.

- **Categorize**, but don't "pigeonhole." Things may be in many categories at the same time. "Clusters" and "mixes" are common. Observers often disagree.

- Understand that advertising is basically **persuasion**, not information nor education. (And not coercion!) Recognize our own involvement in a **mutual** transaction. Persuaders are benefit-promisers, but we are benefit-seekers. Most ads relate to simple trade-offs of mutual benefits: consumers get a pleasure, producers a profit.

- **Anticipate incoming information**. Have some way to sort, some place to store. If you know common patterns, you can pick up cues from bits and fragments, recognize the situation, know the probable options, infer the rest, and even note the omissions. Some persuaders use these techniques (and some observers analyze them) consciously and systematically; others do so intuitively and haphazardly.

- **Train yourself** by first analyzing those "easy" ads which explicitly use the full sequence of "the pitch." Always check for this full sequence (which includes "urgency-stressing" and a specific "response-seeking"). When it does not appear, consider what may have been omitted, assumed, or implied. "Soft sell" ads and corporate "image building" ads are harder to analyze because less is said and more is implied.

- **Practice**. Analysis is a skill which can best be learned by doing it. It's one thing to agree, passively, with these ideas. It's another to analyze an ad, actively, and systematically, with such a detailed 1-2-3-4-5 pattern of "the pitch." You've seen thousands of ads, but you've not taken them apart this way. After you've done it ten times, or fifty, you will be a much better analyst. Such exercises are not busy work. **Learning by doing** is important.

- Read this book in small segments, spaced out over many short sessions, focused on the separate topics. Read the individual chapters just before you plan to watch TV. **Apply the general principles** about that topic to the specific ad examples you see. Use the Word Lists to see the patterns of predictable words for various categories of products and services.

- **Videotape**, if possible. **Replay** in slow motion, freeze-frame, or backwards to focus on various parts. No one can "see" or "understand" everything during the "real time" 30 seconds while watching a TV ad. At best, you pick up a few impressions. In newspaper and magazine ads, circle "key" words, or use colored pens for notes.

- Use your **library** to get current statistics and information on advertising and FTC issues: *Advertising Age*, Business Periodicals Index, New York Times Index.

Exercises

1. **Memorize** the 1-2-3-4-5 "fingertip formula" contained in the key words of the cartoon balloons.
2. As you watch a TV ad, make some kind of **instant analysis** related to these techniques: try to identify your **dominant impression**.
3. Create your own **shorthand** notations to analyze ads.

Whether you like it or not, advertising exists. You can close your eyes, but it won't go away. During your lifetime, it will continue to grow in scope and sophistication. You don't have a choice about that. But, you do have a choice about learning more about how it operates.

Chapter Five

ATTENTION-GETTING

Hundreds of thousands of ads compete for our attention. Today, nearly 50,000 new TV commercials are produced each year, making up only a small portion of the total number of ads we see and hear. Billions of dollars are spent on a process of persuasion in which a very critical step is the initial point of contact between the persuader and the audience. The first part of "the pitch" is the attention-getter: **Hi!**

You can't persuade if no one's listening or watching.

First, an ad has to get attention; finally, an effective ad has to get response. But primarily, an ad has to be heard or seen.

"The greatest sin in advertising," as one wit said, "is not to be noticed," a paraphrase of that cynical comment, "There's no such thing as bad publicity." People may hate certain TV commercials ("Ring Around the Collar," based on the singsong childhood taunt, usually wins the Most-Hated contests), but getting noticed, getting through the **clutter** of thousands of other ads, is a very important goal for most advertisers. Frequently, an obnoxious ad will be continued deliberately because it is still effectively selling the product to a large enough audience. Ideally, of course, an advertisement should be both noticed and liked. But, first things first.

Wider Context

Start by considering the wider **context**: the programs that surround the ads. Recognize that the things we like — our "entertainments" (TV, movies, sports) are used by the media **to deliver audiences** to the advertisers. This is how broadcasters see themselves. While broadcasters may use "service" words in their public statements to sustain an illusion of public service, if you read the trade books and business magazines, you will see their other statements.

Broadcasting didn't begin this way in the 1930's when radio stations first started. The concept of "public service" was strong and, when advertising was carried, a single "sponsor" was linked to a specific program in order to get the good will and gratitude of the audience. Such sponsorship rarely exists today. Texaco has sponsored the Metropolitan Opera radio broadcasts for over 50 years; Hallmark has long sponsored its "Hall of Fame" dramas in the holiday season, and Mobil has sponsored the "Masterpiece Theatre" on PBS. But, generally speaking, program sponsorship has been replaced by clusters of individual, unrelated commercials, and the only "public service" you're likely to see is on early Sunday morning when the broadcasters fulfill their legal obligations to run their PSAs--Public Service Announcements.

Sports

Sports existed before TV ads. But, the "sports industry" as seen today is relatively new, dating from the 1980's. Television commercials are now the major source of money for both professional and "amateur" athletics. For example, NBC paid over $400 million for the exclusive rights to broadcast the 1992 Summer Olympics in Barcelona. In turn, NBC will sell advertising time on the 160 hours which they will broadcast on "free" TV, and also sell a full-coverage "cable package" (600 hours for about $150) to a few million sports enthusiasts.

Sports events and scheduling are now geared to attract the largest TV audiences. Night baseball was introduced because the "prime-time" TV audience was larger than the afternoon audience. (Even the Chicago Cubs, alas, eventually added lights at Wrigley Field.) Televised football and basketball games now have scheduled "TV Time Outs" for ads. Sports "seasons" now overlap as unending "play off" games have been added. ESPN has now achieved a near total saturation point of round-the-clock, year-around sports and ads.

When television was first started, almost any show or athletic event on the 3 networks attracted a very large audience because there was very little competition. Now, however, with 40 or 50 cable stations, plus VCRs and cheap video rentals, the competition for a viewing audience is much greater. So, in order to deliver a large audience to their advertisers, the various TV networks are bidding higher and paying more to the various team owners, who then are getting pressured by (the business agents of) their "stars" who want bigger contracts. Thus, now we have many athlete superstars getting multi-million dollar contracts. Within the past few years, the "sports industry" has radically changed, is now commercialized, being driven by those little 30-second spots!

Movies

Advertisers know how to reach the huge audiences who are attracted to the movies. For more than fifty years, many companies have had agents in Hollywood whose primary job it was to get their products (such as cars or kitchen appliances) into background scenes, or perhaps briefly mentioned: a free "plug." Relatively speaking, this was a small, incidental matter.

But, big changes have occurred during the corporate mergers of the 1980's, when the major movie studios were bought out by the huge corporations which also owned the companies making consumer products. Since then, many movies have been filled with ads embedded in the **foreground** scenes: for example, an actor, close-up, slowly drinking a brand-name can of soda pop; or an actress, wearing designer jeans, with a close-up on the labels. Such "ads" are targeted both at the theatre-audience and the later, and larger, VCR home-audience.

Furthermore, film-makers in the 1980's began to work on *both* movies and ads, with many crossover techniques, such as the "high production values" of MTV: close-ups, quick cuts, celebrities, and costly sets. Movies look like ads and ads look like movies. Mark Crispin Miller (in "Hollywood, the Ad," *Atlantic Monthly*, April, 1990) pointed out how advertising has influenced the **kinds** of characters and stories we are getting now as many movies are being made primarily as **vehicles** simply to deliver ads in a pleasant context. And *Advertising Age* (Dec. 10, 1990) noted that, since 1988, "a new era of marketing sophistication" began as Hollywood adopted Madison Avenue techniques.

Young people should know that these changes in sports and in the movies are very *recent* developments. Today, the younger generation is growing up in an environment super-saturated with sophisticated commercial persuasion as never before seen by their elders who've seen a lot of ads in their lifetime!

Major Audience Lures on Television

- Recent Hit Movies
- Celebrities, Stars, Specials
- Rose Bowl Parade (January)
- Bowl Games (January)
- NFL Superbowl (January)
- Academy Awards (March)
- NCAA Basketball Tournament (March)
- Indianapolis Speedway Race (May)
- Kentucky Derby (May)
- World Series (October)
- Olympics
- World Cup (soccer) outside USA

Radio

Radio stations attract audiences (and deliver them to their advertisers) not only by their programs (hit songs, soft rock, hard rock, talk shows, and so on), but also by their contests, give-aways, and prizes designed to keep an audience listening. In big cities, where many radio stations compete for the same audiences, disk-jockeys often function as the attention-getting "personalities": friendly and soothing, or witty and sarcastic, depending on what kind of audience they seek to attract.

Outdoor

Outdoor advertising "billboards" are major attention-getters in our car-oriented society. Busy highways and crowded city streets would be wall-to-wall with advertising billboards if there were not federal and local laws restricting signs. At one time, there were so many big billboards on the highways that they provoked a "Beautify America" reform movement in the 1960's which successfully got laws passed to restrict billboards on the newly-built federal highway system. However, since then, advertisers have found loopholes in these laws and have built larger billboards, huge signs, just beyond the restricted zones bordering our inter-state highways.

Most cities also have laws prohibiting "excessive" signs and billboards. But, here also, the advertisers keep gaining ground as they create what many people think of as a "visual pollution" of our urban living space. For example, after cigarette ads got forced off television, tobacco companies spent a lot of money for billboards within "city limits" unregulated by inter-state laws. Nearly every big city in America is plastered with huge "Marlboro Country" billboards with images of macho cowboys and beautiful horses. Most inner-city ghetto areas are plastered thick with liquor and beer ads, a situation which has angered many local neighborhood groups.

In any situation when large crowds gather outdoors (beachfront activities, parks, football stadiums, races), you are likely to see hot air balloons, blimps, or airplanes towing advertising banners.

"Captive audiences" — those people "who can't get away" whenever people have to sit and wait, or are in a line, or, where ever specialized audiences gather (such as airline passengers, or in doctors waiting rooms, or in health clubs) are sought after by advertisers.

Advertisers are so very aggressive to grab audiences, to put ads in every spot possible, that the basic guideline today is that when you *don't* see ads, you may safely infer that there are some regulations prohibiting them.

> "Whatever medicine was sold, and whatever attractions were used to lure the citizenry, the sales pitch was always sandwiched in between entertainment. It would not do to begin selling at once, for the audience would feel themselves short-changed. A proper mood needed creating.... When the pitchman took over, he did not begin by mentioning medicine."
> - James Young, *The Toadstool Millionaires*
> (a history of 19th century patent medicines)

Channel One

Channel One (Christopher Whittle's media company) discovered a new way to **deliver the audience** to advertisers by offering gifts (TV sets, VCRs, and satellite dishes) and goodies (a package of educational programs and 10 minute newscasts — **plus 2 minutes of ads**) to 8,000 schools by April, 1991. In return, these schools signed 3 year contracts to deliver a daily viewing audience of over 5 million kids to Whittle, who then sold these 2 minutes of time to a variety of national advertisers for $150,000 for each 30-second commercial.

In his promotional material to the schools, Whittle stressed the educational benefits to the students, downplayed the ads ("1,030 hours of educational television... funded by six hours of advertisements"), and promised only "appropriate" ads: no alcohol, tobacco, contraceptives, feminine hygiene products, gambling, abortion clinics, or "Head Shops." (!) In his pitch to the advertisers, he promised a controlled, **clutter-free** environment in which their ads would get more attention. For advertisers selling to the "youth market," or who want to establish "brand loyalty" early, Channel One's fast-paced programming keeps the attention of a large audience for its "harmless" ads (i.e. not causing immediate and direct harms) for various candies, cereals, and cosmetics. The ads seen are pleasant and upbeat ("happy times" and "feel good" ads), bland and non-controversial (no boat-rockers from Whittle).

Highly controversial, Channel One has caused many arguments among educators at the local level, with both sides acting with "good intentions." Obviously, thousands of teachers and school boards have approved it. Thousands of others have rejected it, several states ban it, and several court cases are underway to remove it. This debate will continue, not only for those schools not yet signed up, but also when it's contract renewal time. If Channel One schools don't renew the contract, they will lose their "free" hardware. (CNN NEWSROOM provides cable newcasts and school programs, **ad-free**, to some 10,000 schools, at no cost except for slight set-up fees, but does **not** provide free TVs, VCRs, and satellite dishes.)

Most **advocates** of Channel One tolerate the ads, reluctantly, as **"reasonable trade offs"** (unintended side-effects) to get the benefits of programs and hardware, stressing student needs and the inability of schools to afford new technology. Many people dismiss ads simply as trivial interruptions, or insignificant annoyances, and see **no problem** ("no harm done," "kids see ads at home"). Others point out, correctly, that much commercialism **already exists** in schools in corporate-sponsored "educational" films, scoreboard ads, free-samples, contests, sales, collecting labels, and so on.

Opponents of Channel One see it as a serious **escalation** of commercialism in the classroom, of schools "selling their students in wholesale lots" as "captive audience," violating basic policies, or even laws. Some object to the implied message that "everyone has a price, anyone can be bought." Some see these "approved" ads as a cynical use of the **"association"** technique with these ads and companies having the implicit endorsement (the explicit approval!) by the school's authority figures. Some see in-class commercial persuasion as offensive as in-class political or religious persuasion. Some see an **imbalance** between the professional persuaders (well funded, tightly focused) and the classroom teachers, usually overburdened, often untrained or uninterested in persuasion analysis, with no mandate or requirement to deal with that which is so tightly packaged into 30 seconds. **(See Editorial, p.42)**

Content

Very few people seek out ads, except when consciously shopping for a particular product. Thus, at any one time, advertisers often face a market which is generally uninterested in their product. If consumers complain sometimes that there's too much advertising, advertisers also complain that there are too few people listening to their particular message. The marketplace of the mass media is quite like the din of the old time marketplace or the noisy oriental bazaar with sellers trying to shout or scream louder than their competitors. In such a situation, attention-getting is one of the main concerns of sellers and advertisers; however, there are so many variables that few advertisers even agree on a definition of what is meant by an attention-getter.

Attention-getting, here, is sorted into three main categories, concerning the **content** within ads, which cover most (if not all) of the techniques and devices usually mentioned: **(1) Physical attention-getters:** simple signals to our senses, usually sight and hearing; **(2) Emotional attention-getters:** words and images with strong emotional associations; **(3) Cognitive attention-getters:** certain patterns, appealing to our intellect, which lead us in, curious to find out more.

All three of these categories involve a focusing, or selective narrowing, of our thought and consciousness. All three aspects often co-exist and are inter-related. Most effective ads have many things going at once, multiple and simultaneous appeals. In order to understand ads better, we have to take them apart in smaller bits.

In analyzing any ad, remember that the typical 30-second spot television commercial is the synthesis, the end result, of months of work by a skilled team of people putting it together: writers, artists, designers, camera crews, a whole host of technicians and specialists, and often market researchers, behavioral psychologists, advisors, and consultants. Thus, much has gone into the making of an ad, and much could be said about any ad. One way to start analyzing an ad is to look at the openers, the attention-getters.

(1) Physical attention-getters. The first major category refers to the simple perception of signals, the basic incoming stimuli received by our senses. Our sense of **vision**, for example, responds to shapes, sizes, colors, lights, and motion. Our **hearing** responds to the intensity, frequency, and duration of sounds; we note their regularity, context and backgrounds. We notice the **unusual**, the atypical in our environment, as if an animal were suddenly alerted by a sound or a sight. Often, we observe it until we're able to understand it, mentally deciding where to fit it into the rest of our experience. Anything which creates an unusual, atypical experience for our senses can be considered an attention-getter.

Simple visual and audio signals attracting our attention may be such things as a hand signal, waving at us or beckoning to us, accompanied by a smile or a come-hither look. Some attention-getting devices have been with us longer than others: the voices of merchants hawking their wares in the marketplace and circus barkers ("Hurry, Hurry, Hurry, Step Right Up...") have had a long history, as well as certain music associated with attention-getting: drum rolls, trumpet fanfares, and a whole range of attention calls made from brass bugles, ram's horns, and conch shells. Such elementary human signals to gain our attention are still very much with us, but modern advertising is not restricted to the yelling or shouting range of one human being.

In our Age of Hype (and Super-Hype), we often see so many intense things (flashing lights, loud noises, bright colors) that they tend to be the norm and lose their individual power of attention-getting. On television, attention-getters might include various electronic or photographic techniques as slow-motion replays, stop-action ("freeze frame"), time-lapse photography, split-screen pictures, close-ups, blurred focus, cross-sections, enlarged details, computer graphics, and so on. In print, attention-getters might include the various styles and designs in the typeface, graphics, photos, even Scratch-and-Sniff (encapsulated bubbles in the ink) novelties. In any large city, one is likely to see a dozen different attention-getters such as flags fluttering on used-car lots, billboard "sandwich men," flashing neon signs, loudspeakers, airplanes towing banners, blimps, hot air balloons, and searchlights at night. Thus, in one way, we can talk about such simple things as lights, colors, noises, and moving objects as being attention-getters. But, there are other ways to gain attention.

Very simply, we're social beings, accustomed to two-way conversations, the give and take of ordinary life. Someone looks at us, we look back at them. They talk to us, we listen. Someone points a finger at something, we look. Someone tells us to do something, we do it. Not always. Not all people. But enough, that such blunt attention-getting and "hard sells" do work with some people.

(2) Emotional attention-getters. The second major category refers to the use of any words or images (or sounds or smells) which have strong emotional associations. The use of the association technique is extremely common in all persuasion, not only as the initial attention-getter, but also as one of the main elements throughout the whole process of persuasion.

The **association technique** basically links three elements together: (1) **the idea or product,** with (2) **something already held favorably by, or desired by,** (3) **the intended audience.**

In one way, emotional appeals are the easiest attention-getters to recognize. If you watch TV commercials or look at print ads, you'll be able to spot many emotional attention-getters used frequently in advertising: pretty girls, babies and cute kids, cats and dogs, nature scenery, scenes of playful "good times" with friends and family, smiling young lovers, churches and steeples, fluttering flags waving, and patriotic scenes.

Millions of combinations of such good things are possible. Later chapters will present some 24 common categories, together with lists of words and images often used. It's not necessary for you to know or to memorize all of these various categories, just as long as you recognize that the general pattern of this association technique is basically an appeal to our emotions.

Many critics of advertising disapprove of any emotional appeal and say that advertisers shouldn't do such things. But here, the assumption is that the emotional appeal is one of the ways in which people have always used in trying to persuade others. The purpose here is not to condemn or to praise it, but to explain it. Emotional appeals, made through the use of the association techniques, are very effective in getting our attention and in persuading us to action.

3) Cognitive attention-getters. The third major category refers to those attention-getting devices which have certain patterns, appealing to our intellect, which lead us into a message, curious to find out more.

Most people are rather orderly processors of information, more or less following certain sorting patterns and certain sequences of ideas. Even if the current advertising blitz did not exist, people would still have a certain basic curiosity, interested about the world around them. Even without external encouragement, people would seek news and advice, exchange stories and information.

People are information-seekers and benefit-seekers. We seek information as a means to the end of seeking benefits. Advertisers, and other persuaders, are information-providers and benefit-promisers.

Here's a list of 10 common ways in which ads can get our attention by providing information or promising a benefit:

1. **News**
2. **Lists & Displays**
3. **Claims & Promises**
4. **Advice**
5. **Lead-Ins**
6. **Questions**
7. **Stories**
8. **Demonstrations**
9. **Breaking Rules**
10. **Humor**

1. News. People seek news. Many advertisements are basically announcements providing information about new products, new uses for existing products, or the availability of a product at a certain price. Consider the thousands of new products invented, developed, and marketed in the past half century. Radio, television, home appliances, computers, calculators — all had to be introduced with some very basic explanations of what they were intended to do, and how they were to be used.

Many local retail ads are simple **announcements:** the items are available, here and now, at this price. In early American newspapers, advertising began with such simple announcements: "A ship has landed in port, with these goods." Some critics would like to restrict advertising to this kind of basic information. However, most ads today seek not only to inform, but also to persuade. In discussions of advertising, informational ads are generally the least controversial; usually the only criteria applied would be the truth or accuracy (or any significant omission) of the information.

2. Lists & Displays. People like to read **lists**, especially those which are rank-ordered such as "Top Ten Best Sellers," "5 Best Buys," "8 Important Things to do before Christmas." Nearly every newspaper and magazine uses listings as standard items. Advertisers, too, utilize our natural list-making and list-reading tendencies in the large number of ads which provide lists and rankings.

In addition, people like to look at **displays** of many items. We like to see selections, assortments, and varieties of products. Mail order catalogues, for example, are extremely popular; many people spend hours browsing through these displays of merchandise, just to see what's available, what are the prices and styles. People are classifiers and collectors, delighting in making and seeing displays of many items. Variety is the spice of life. Advertisers attract our attention by offering us such displays. Note how many ads show a selection of many varieties, such as 20 different models of cars, 15 different dresses, 57 varieties of foods, or 10 different models of homes.

3. Claims and Promises. People are interested in claims and promises. A **claim,** as the term is used here, is a proposition or an assertion that a product is something, or has some quality, or does something. A **promise,** as the term is used here, means that it will benefit the buyer. Such claims and promises can be used as attention-getters, as well as during the whole process of persuasion.

The famous adman, John Caples, once recommended to advertising writers: "First and foremost, try to get self-interest into every headline you write. Make your headline suggest to the reader that here is something he wants."

Claims and promises about the **product** itself are discussed in this book under a dozen general categories: Superiority, Quantity, Efficiency, Beauty, Scarcity, Utility, Novelty, Stability, Reliability, Safety, Simplicity, and Rapidity. The specific words used will vary in different ads, but there are certain key words in many of these categories which are proven attention-getters, such as *free, exciting, new, quick and easy,* and *take advantage of.*

However, the "**intangibles**"—the emotional associations suggested by many ads are not intrinsic to the product, nor are they often explicitly claimed or promised. Two dozen categories of such "added values" relating to human needs and wants (such as food, activity, health, sex, intimacy, belonging, esteem, and creativity) are discussed more fully later. In practice, many explicit claims and implicit suggestions cluster together, appear simultaneously, and are used both for attention-getters and the main body of the ad.

4. Advice. People often seek advice from others, especially from those with knowledge or authority. Many people look for certitude, for approval and permission from outside sources. Even those people who would reject, or rebel against, orders imposed by someone else, would welcome "advice" if it is given properly, that is, given as a **hint** or a suggestion.

The words **"how to..."** are some of the most often used and most effective words in advertising. How-to-do-it books, on practically any subject, are the most frequently demanded books in libraries and bookstores. How-to-do-it articles are the staple features of popular magazines. One of the best attention-getters in practically any situation are these two simple words: how to... .

5. Lead-Ins. People can be led into an idea by certain patterns within our language. There are a variety of ways in which we wait, in a kind of suspense, for the completion of an idea: the resolution, the conclusion, the closure. A question is the most commonly used and most obvious lead-in (See #6); logically, it's designed to elicit some kind of response. But a question is not the only opener which can be used as a "hook" or a "grabber." There are both **obvious** and **subtle** ways to arouse our interest.

Obvious ways would be the use of some kind of a **teaser,** a deliberate fragment, a conversation interrupted, a peek, a come-on for the "strip-tease effect." Movies, for example, often advertise "coming attractions" with film-clips of increasing tensions or exciting actions just about to climax. Such "cliff-hangers" are designed to leave us in suspense and bring us, as paying customers, to see the conclusion.

Using a **paradox,** a seemingly self-contradictory statement, is another obvious lead-in. Poets and preachers have often caught our attention by opening with paradoxical phrasings, and then explaining away the seeming contradictions. Advertisers, too, will catch our interest by telling us that here's the "fastest slow ride in town" or here's the "most complicated simple machine ever made."

Wanted! This one simple word, especially as a bold headline, is a very common, very effective attention-getter. Used as a lead-in, we read on, curious to find out what or who is wanted.

Other obvious lead-ins are the **congratulatory praises** and promises often seen as openers in direct mail advertisements: "Congratulations... You've been chosen... You've won... You've been selected... A free gift awaits you... ."

More **subtle** lead-ins would include the use of **sentence structures** such as the periodic sentence, in which the full meaning is withheld until the end. Writers can pile up the front of a sentence with modifiers and dependent clauses, and withhold the basic subject-predicate relationship. Writers can stress **premise indicators** (Since, Because, etc.) which will logically lead to conclusion indicators (Thus, Therefore, etc.) at the end of the sentence or paragraph. Or, sentences can use **hypotheticals** (If...then) which force us on to the ending: "If you're thinking of buying; If you like _____, you'll love _____; If you want _____; If you need _____.

6. Questions. Questions are the most obvious, explicit, common, and very important lead-ins used as attention-getters in advertising copy. In most cases, they are **rhetorical questions**, which do not expect an audible answer, but are seeking some kind of inner response. Pay attention to these questions very commonly asked in ads: Why? Which? How? Who? Who else? Where else? Do you? Can you? When have you? Have you ever? Will you? When are you? Why not? Why pay more?

In person-to-person selling, there are certain questions used as **standard formalities.** Sales clerks are trained to ask polite questions which are designed both to be pleasant "openers" and to elicit a response. If such phrases are not used, some people are offended by the rudeness or curtness; if such formalities are misused and overused, then they seem to be phony, artificial, or obsequious. Consider the following attention-getters, which you have heard frequently in personal selling, and think of how the tone of voice or facial expression accompanying these questions influenced your response:

"May I help you?"

"Is there anything I can show you?"

"Do you have any questions?"

"Have you seen our new item?"

"Are you looking for a gift?"

"Would you like a sample?"

"Would you like to see something special?"

"Is there something I can do for you?"

"Have you heard about this?"

7. Stories. People are interested in **narratives** and **dramatizations** which involve people, their conflicts, and how they resolve them. TV commercials often use a story as the form in which the product message is delivered. Such narratives are also common in print ads, cartoon strips, photo sequences, and, sometimes, even one dramatic picture from which the rest of the story can be inferred.

The characters involved in these stories are usually presented as **role models**, setting examples of behavior, showing us how to act or respond in certain situations (usually by buying the product). Basically, such characters and stories can be divided into realistic and non-realistic presentations.

Realistic ("slice of life") stories used in advertising usually show close-to-life experiences of their intended audiences: situations such as dressing, shopping, eating, greetings and farewells, driving, doing household chores — washing, cooking, diapering, and so on. Usually, "plain folks" actors are used in TV commercials to help create a stronger audience empathy, or strong identification with such people "just like us." Conflicts are often little problems (headaches, dirty clothes) which can be resolved quickly with the product offered: a mild version of the "scare-and-sell" technique.

Non-realistic stories are often **wish-fulfillment fantasies**. In advertising, these are often commercial versions of our daydreams, our wishes and hopes, our aspirations acted out. The characters and situations are usually romanticized, idealized, exaggerated. The models used, for example, are likely to be the "beautiful people" doing very exciting or fashionable things (racing cars or yachts, going to elegant parties in homes, and walking on white sandy beaches), then using the product (beer, cola, clothes, or cosmetics).

Borderlines will exist between reality and fantasy, varying with the audience's response. A street-interview scene, for example, may be realistic to some; to others it might involve their fantasy dream of esteem, of somebody asking their opinion about something. Yet, the general areas of realistic and non-realistic stories are recognizable, even though there will be an occasional attention-getting variation, such as inserting a non-realistic element into a realistic scene (e.g., a typical household scene in which a medieval knight suddenly appears, holding a box of soap).

Parodies ("take-offs") are attention-getters. Some ads follow the same basic storyline patterns (stock situations and visual cliches) previously established in noncommercial narratives: western stories, police adventure stories, science-fiction, song-and-dance musicals ("production numbers"). Audiences often recognize the familiar patterns, then notice the differences in the commercial version; the intent and the result are frequently humorous.

In addition to the use of stories as attention-getters within an advertisement, consider the **context:** the broader picture, that stories, unrelated to any specific ad, are often used as part of the entertainments which lure us to the places where the ads will be on television, in newspapers and magazines.

8. Demonstrations. People are interested in demonstrations which explain and illustrate by showing how something works or how it's used. Demonstrations are very strong forms of proof. It's much more effective to show something working than simply to say that it can work. Demonstrations, in all their various forms (including free samples and "hands-on" test-drives), lend credibility and confidence to any persuasion attempt. Because it is such an effective technique, many persuaders will use demonstrations. People are more likely to believe in demonstrations than in verbal claims and promises.

This has always created some problems relating to deceptive demonstrations. In the past, for example, some demonstrations could be faked: worthless mines could be "salted" with gold, horses "doctored" to look better, livestock "watered" to add weight. But, today, the potential for wholesale deception is far greater. On television, for example, there are so many ways of creating illusions, with visuals and special effects, that a demonstration can be easily altered. Thus, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has probably given more attention to the problems of demonstrations than to any other form of deceptive advertising.

Four common kinds of demonstrations are: **step-by-step** demonstrations showing the process or sequence of how something works, often used to introduce new products or complicated ones; **before-and-after** demonstrations showing the effects, results or the consequences, often used with "efficiency" claims: **side-by-side** comparison demonstrations, often used with "superiority" and "quantity" claims demonstrating that one product "is better" or "has more" than others; **behind-the-scenes** demonstrations, (or "inside story" or "backstage") showing how something was made, or who made it or the reasons behind it, often used to justify expense or to humanize a corporation.

9. Breaking Rules. People notice when rules are broken, that is, when **deviations** are made from any standard or customary procedure. Deviations are related to **repetition** techniques, inversely, because any departure from the norm implies that the standard convention had been previously established by long-term repetition within the culture. Unconventional behavior may be annoying, but it is attention-getting.

Common deviations used by advertisers as attention-getters include deliberate misspellings (Kathy's Kwicky Kitchen, Su-Z-Q's, Kof-E-Brake), deliberate use of "bad grammar" ("aint"), upside-down billboard signs, and so on. Mild oaths ("hell" and "damn") are sometimes used as attention-getters in ads; stronger vulgarity is rarely used.

10. Humor. Often used as an attention-getter, humor also involves some kind of deviation from the norm. Most definitions of humor point out that it relates to something which is unexpected, unanticipated, inappropriate, or incongruous, to the situation. We laugh at many things simply because they do not make sense logically, they do not follow, or they do not belong.

The humor usually seen in advertising is more likely to be the mild, mellow, lighthearted humor which provokes a smile or a chuckle rather than a full laugh. In ads, we're likely to laugh with, rather than laugh at, the speaker. The biting humor of satire is seldom found in ads.

Self-deprecating humor is sometimes used in ads; but this is usually a form of the *concessive argument*. Volkswagon, for example, used to kid their own cars as being "plain" or "ugly" (concede a minor point) because their major selling points were "superiority," "economy," "efficiency," and "practicality."

Humor as an attention-getter, can take many forms ranging from pie-throwing slapstick and sight gags to the witty cleverness of puns. Word play is very common in advertising; puns abound in headlines, copy, and even in the names of products and retail stores. Sexual puns, double entendres, are frequently used in some advertising contexts (men's magazines) as attention-getters.

In brief: The first step in persuasion is getting and holding the attention of the audience. <> In the **wider context**, entertainments (such as TV programs, sports, movies, radio, outdoor, Channel One) are used as the lure to attract audiences. "Media people" (such as the TV networks) today see their job as **"delivering audiences"** to advertisers. <> **Within an ad** itself, multiple attention-getters often work at the same time: **physical stimuli**, **emotional associations**, and a wide variety of **cognitive techniques** (such as news, lists and displays, claims and promises, advice, lead-ins, questions, stories, demonstrations, deviations, humor) — all of which function to attract and to hold the attention of an audience.

An Editorial: On Channel One

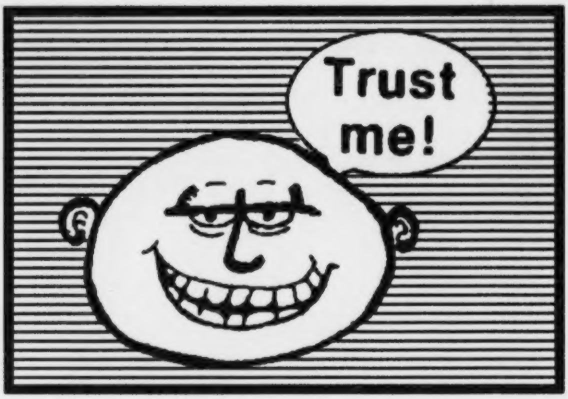
I believe that the issue is not the **presence** of ads in the classroom, but the **purpose**, why they are there, and the **procedures**, how they are handled. If students are expected to be passive receivers of these persuasive messages, either in terms of buying the products or of "feeling good" about them, then there should be no ads: no Channel One, no commercialism in the classroom.

However, ads should be studied as part of a language arts program or a critical thinking program: analyzed as **units of persuasion**, treated seriously as examples of carefully crafted non-rational persuasion.

Ideally, such viewing and analysis of ads should be planned, prepared, and controlled by the **teacher** (not the advertisers), using videotaped ads, or magazine ads. Ideally, this should be done by a trained teacher, in a coherent program, with the goal — in a free democratic society — of teaching the greatest number of young citizens how to analyze persuasion from any source.

I think that Whittle's success in getting Channel One into so many schools so quickly was due to the common attitude ("Advertising doesn't affect me!") that most people don't take ads seriously. Most schools give very little training about how to analyze persuasion, especially of non-rational techniques. Most language arts texts, tests, curriculum, and teacher-training focus on how to *compose exposition*, or how to *analyze expression* (poems,stories). We need to reformulate what language skills and thinking skills we want to emphasize in a free society. Practically speaking, such reforms are not in sight. But, if you agree, you can use the Channel One debate to do what you can —as student or teacher— in your own situation.

For example, if you — willingly or unwillingly — are in a school using Channel One, you're going to see these ads anyway, so use them to your own advantage. Be a **critical viewer**, with an active mind, observant and alert. Remember that these ads will be entertaining, pleasant, funny, "on your side," offering benefits that you want. You don't have to be antagonist, or trash an ad, but you can **take them apart**, you can **analyze** them, in class. If Channel One exists in your classroom, make it a learning experience. Persuaders want response, not analysis. HR



Chapter Six

CONFIDENCE-BUILDING

Everyone gets information from other people. We often believe a message simply on the basis of **our belief in** the speaker. If we already like the speaker, it's likely we'll like what the speaker says.

Establishing trust is basic. All persuaders ("good" or "bad," public or private) can be analyzed in terms of what "image" they project. We believe in, and we buy from, people we trust. Aristotle, over two thousand years ago, claimed that the most effective way to persuade was to project the image (*ethos*) of being:

1) **expert**, that is, knowledgeable, informed, competent, wise, prudent, a person of good judgment and good sense; and
2) **sincere**, that is, honest, trustworthy, truthful, open, candid, a person of integrity and good moral character;
3) **benevolent**, that is, friendly to the audience, a benefactor, a person of good will, with your interest in mind: "on *your* side."

It would be nice if these qualities were really genuine, but Aristotle points out that it's still **very effective** even if there is only the **appearance** of these qualities of expertise, sincerity, and benevolence. So it's possible for a persuader to be pretending or lying — to be fake or a phony — and still be very effective. Maybe it **shouldn't** be that way, but, realistically, that's the way things are! Thus, a major problem in analyzing modern advertising is the issue of persuaders falsely exploiting these techniques of image-building. No simple answer is possible.

In the past, honest merchants established trust with their customers on a long term, person-to-person basis. Such a genuine personal touch may work in a small, simple society. However, business transactions today are much more complex in a huge technological society. Because of the scope and variety of products we consume, the whole manufacturing process of the thousands of producers is often distant and obscure from the millions of consumers.

Yet, sellers still have the problem of attracting customers and of assuring them that the products are good. So there is a **legitimate need** for corporate sellers to create a sense of confidence, to project a good image. Establishing trust, or building confidence, in a product or person need not be deceptive nor artificial. There are many honest people, many good products, and many mutual benefits shared between sellers and buyers. Under most circumstances — when there's a simple sales transaction, honest, and of mutual benefit — there are no problems.

But, problems can occur. Deception and exploitation are possible. First, this chapter will discuss some image building techniques common to **all** persuaders, and then close with some cautions about deception.

Persuaders seek to put an audience in a good mood, to "feel good," in a variety of ways: by means of words and nonverbals, but especially through their choice of presenters (including people making testimonials and endorsements) who usually fall into two categories — authority figures and friend figures.

The basic **strategy** of building confidence is to put the audience in a good mood, trusting and receptive, toward the speaker before the main part of "the pitch" begins. Sometimes this may take place *within* a single ad or message; an unknown speaker, for example, usually has a problem of establishing an image. However, in much advertising today, image-building often takes place in a *wider context*: frequently, we already know or like the speaker and the brand name. A great deal of long-term conditioning (various forms of "public relations," "corporate advertising," and "goodwill" gestures, discussed later) usually occurs within a society, functioning as a solid base on which to build any specific ad campaign.

Flattery is a common **tactic** to put an audience in a good mood. Persuaders often appeal to our pride and vanity. If flattery is done well, we'll never notice it. If it is overdone and obvious to us, we're apt to be suspicious. But, even then, flattery has a persuasive way of convincing us that perhaps we *do* deserve the praise directed our way. To intensify the "good" of the audience — the "good" they really are, or the "good" they'd like to be — is a sure way for the persuader to become welcome.

The best persuasion is *smooth*, is that which goes *unnoticed*, is that which soothes, lulls, relaxes, creates trust, seems natural, credible, and is non-threatening. Later, if a transaction proves unsatisfactory, we might complain that we were seduced, or set up, or talked into it by a smooth talker. But, note the emphasis we usually place on the smoothness of effective persuasion.

CONFIDENCE-BUILDING WORDS:

absolutely safe
assure, assurance, rest assured
candid, candor
certain, certainly
concern, concerned
confident, confidence
depend, dependable
established
experience, experienced
expert, expertise
fair
friend, friendly, friendship
guarantee, guaranty
honest, honesty
informed
integrity
interest, interested
kind, kindly
knowledgeable
no obligation
no risk
nothing to lose
on *your* side
one of us
positive, positively
proven
prudent
reasonable
recommendable
rely, reliable
reputable, reputation
responsible
satisfaction guaranteed
sincere, sincerity
straight, straightforward
trust, trustworthy
true, truth, truthful
wise, wisdom

Words can be used to help build a good image. Persuaders often make explicit statements, simple claims, or assertions about themselves that they are good and trustworthy. "Trust me!"

Just as "the pitch" (Hi!/Trust Me/You Need/Hurry/Buy) is a useful way to emphasize the form, the sequential pattern, of persuasion, so also here's a useful **formula sentence** to focus on the content of the persuader's words in such image-building, in establishing an ethos: **"I am competent and trustworthy; from me, you'll get..."***

*In an earlier work (*English Journal*, December, 1980) analyzing **election rhetoric**, I've recommended a single sentence summing up the basic claims and promises of politicians: ***"I am competent and trustworthy; from me, you'll get more (good) and less (bad)."*** Note that the first part of this sentence epitomizes the basic claims of all persuaders; in the latter part, the comparative factor (more/less) in the promises stresses the competitive nature of an election.

The specific wording can vary; many surface variations are possible. The specific emphasis can vary: "authority figures" may stress expertise, "friend figures" may stress kindness. Basically, three major concepts (**expertise, sincerity, benevolence**) are involved when persuaders say "Trust Me."

Listed in this chapter are commonly used words emphasizing trust in the speaker or seller. Later in the book, a closely-related term ("Reliability") is used to categorize claims about such good qualities inherent in the product.

Nonverbal ways of suggesting trustworthiness have always been very important in our direct, face to face, relationships with each other. But, now with television, it's even more important to notice and understand such "body language," because such nonverbal communication can be carefully contrived to create a good image.

On television, for example, speakers will talk to us, as the camera zooms in, close-up, on their eyes looking directly at us. These presenters, well trained in the appropriate body language, are likely to give us the slight smile, the direct eye contact, the sincere look, the gestures with the open hand upheld, and, usually, the warm voice tone. All of these nonverbals help to create the right mood or atmosphere, often of an informal, relaxed friendly conversation, or fatherly advice or motherly concern.

Behind the scenes, there's a lot of hard work to appear so casual. These nonchalant smiles, sincere looks, and sympathetic head-nods can be rehearsed and practiced, video-taped and re-taped, edited, tested in front of sample audiences, and re-edited, until the final televised version presents the result designed to please their target audience.

Visual images and other nonverbals **imply**. Instead of explicit claims (perhaps only a few words), most of the "message" is suggested by the visuals and other nonverbals. Then, the audience "fills in the gaps" from what they see, and co-creates.

Thus, modern advertising gives great attention to the "**presenters**," those people selected to deliver the messages: the models and actors who appear in ads in magazines and on television, the people who do the mellow voice-overs, and to the celebrities who do the testimonials and endorsements. Such presenters, in relation to confidence-building, can be divided into two basic categories: **authority figures** and **friend figures**.

Authority figures are those presenters whom we trust or like because they suggest the good aspects of the nurturing parent: the protective care, wisdom, and guidance of the kind father or mother, the idealized "Mom and Dad," or of parent surrogates, such as teachers, advisors, and mentors. The emphasis here is on their knowledge, expertise, competency, and certitude. Presenters such as the TV actor Karl Malden (for American Express cards), the real test-pilot Chuck Yeager, and the fictional Betty Crocker are good examples of such authority figures.

Friend figures are those presenters whom we trust or like because they suggest people we would like **to be**, or **be with**, or **be liked by**. In various ads, such friends can range from "plain folks" to idealized "beautiful people" of our wish-fulfillment dreams, or even "cute" fictional characters, cartoons and animals.

Some of these images play to our fantasies of being the center of attention, of having lots of friends to play with, of being noticed and appreciated, of being surrounded by admiring fans. (Every kid playing basketball alone on an empty court probably does so with an imaginary audience and sound-track.)

Advertisers do not expect many people to make **conscious** decisions based on such images, to act like robots and go out and buy a product because their heroes endorse it. But, we do **subconsciously** imitate or model our behavior after people we like and admire.

Every era has its beautiful people, admired and envied by millions: celebrities, movie stars, musicians, fashion models, athletes, and social leaders. Such people can usually be rented by advertisers who know that pretty faces can sell products. Sometimes this is literally true: faces of beautiful women are the most commonly-used presenters in magazine ads and television commercials. But, many variations are possible: for example, male sports heroes, business executives, and even fictional characters.

Fictional characters, both human and animal, can be created to present a product. Such "central continuing characters" (advertising jargon) are often cheaper and much easier to control than humans. Well known fictional characters include: Ronald McDonald, Betty Crocker, Aunt Jemima, the Pillsbury Doughboy, and the Jolly Green Giant.

Most of these fictional characters can be described as being "cute" — that is, likable or lovable, like a doll or a pet, a variation of the friend figure. Kids watching TV today grow up with all sorts of friendly animals (turtles and mice and cats and whatever), as well as all sorts of flying heroes, trying to sell them products. Older children seldom understand how these cartoons are syndicated and franchised. Very young children don't even understand that these characters are not "real."

Variations on basic themes are common. Some modeling agencies, for example, specialize in providing celebrity look-alikes, not so much to save money, as to be an attention-getter. Other modeling agencies specialize in providing "uglies" and "plain folks" for certain commercials which are deliberately designed to avoid the "slick" look associated with beautiful models. Large corporations, for example, often seek to humanize their image by using such "plain folks" techniques.

Trade marks and **brand names** are some of the oldest and most obvious kinds of confidence-building techniques. Good craftsmen, for example, in the pre-industrial age, put their own marking on the pottery and silverware they made as a way of identifying their work. Thus, *trademarks*, and later *brand names*, became associated with reputable established companies and quality products. Today, in the United States, there are over 500,000 registered trademarks, most of which are competing to be known and liked by the public.

Brand names are important confidence builders. Many corporations and advertisers spend a great deal of time and money to build a reputation for their products. "Brand loyalty" is the dream of every seller: that buyers would know, trust, and prefer their brand. In general, brand name products and established stores *are* more trustworthy than unbranded items and unknown stores.

In business, a well known and trusted name is worth a lot of money. A reputable company often takes great effort in protecting its name, not only in its internal operations (such as, product quality-control, guarantees, customer relations) but also with external factors. Famous brands are often imitated, copied, pirated, and counterfeited. Alas, there are even disadvantages in gaining the confidence and trust of the public.

New confidence-building techniques include the "**personal touch**" in computer-generated direct mail and telephone sales. In the future, as more personal information about us is collected, many more kinds of computer-generated "personal" messages will be sent to millions of people — by mail, by phone, by voicemail, by fax, by cable.

Direct mail advertising, for example, has long used some very clever techniques to personalize mail: print typefaces giving "personal" letters the appearance of being hand-typed; signatures printed in another ink, or even made with handwriting machines, so that the letters appear to be personally signed. (U.S. Presidents use such machines so that their secretarial staff can produce thousands of artificial "personal letters" every day.) People who used to throw away the mail addressed to "Occupant" or "Homeowner," now are reading the computer written letters directed, personally, to them: "Dear Mr. Tom Jones, Is your house at 871 Oak Street adequately insured?"

High school students, soon after taking the SAT or ACT tests, will receive such mailings and brochures — and telephone calls — from colleges recruiting their "customers." Usually, small colleges stress their image of "friendliness"; big ones stress "expertise" (prestige, facilities); most offer — as a form of flattery — "scholarships" (not "discounts").

Telephones are a favorite tool of modern sellers. A telephone call is a great attention-getter because very few people will let a phone keep ringing. Most people are curious or polite, and will often interrupt all other activity to answer the phone. But, if the caller is trying to sell us something, or if we recognize the smooth practiced sales pitch being delivered from some "boiler room" operation, in which dozens of phone solicitors are talking to potential customers, we may become annoyed.

In the past, there was always a human being, no matter how annoying, at the other end of the line: the telephone was a genuine *interpersonal* machine. New technology makes it possible for a computer to "dial" the number, then activate a tape-recorded sales message when we answer the phone. These sophisticated devices are growing in popularity with advertisers (and with politicians during election campaigns), creating a controversy about the intrusion on our privacy by means of such "junk phone calls" and "junk fax." Several states have already enacted some restrictions on their use, but there's no uniform national policy.

Corporate Image, Public Relations, and Public Information

Sometimes we see ads that are very difficult to analyze because there are **no consumer products** involved, such as in ads from Cargil, Dow, Union Carbide, United Technologies, General Dynamics, and TRW.

Just as individuals seek to project a good image, so also corporations seek to project a good "corporate image," stressing their **benevolence** of their being "on our side." In the past, the study of rhetoric focused on the **individual** as a persuader, often discussing how the individual can present the best image. Today, the presentation of "self" is often a **corporate** process done by committees, for large corporations. The purpose of such persuasion is to present their case and to make us "feel good" about them and their policies, so that we'll be on "their side."

Such ads are designed to create a long-term climate of favorable **public opinion**: to reduce public demand for government regulation of industry, or higher corporate taxes; to gain support for controversial public policies (such as offshore oil drilling, "multiple use" forestry, nuclear energy, specific weapons systems); or to counter negative images of being monopolies, middlemen, polluters, or profiteers. Terms used to label this kind of persuasion include words such as "corporate advertising," "institutional advertising," "image advertising," — and related terms — "public relations," "good will" ads, "public relations," "PR," and "publicity."

The method used is often the "**association technique**" which links the corporation with pleasant things (or ideas and values) which the audience **already like**. Corporate ads are usually filled with all sorts of "warm fuzzies" and this glow of pleasant associations (family and friends, home and country, patriotic appeals) can often distract attention away from any problem situations.

Consider the environmental issue, for example. No one wants to be the "bad guy," the polluter, or the villain here. Thus, the major oil and chemical companies — the basic sources of pollution — publicize their "care" for the environment. Their critics say that it's cheaper for them to spend a few million on such "image-building" than it is to spend billions on real environmental protection.

Dow Chemical, for example, in an expensive campaign series of "feel good" ads has a whole generation of kids growing up today who can sing or hum their slogan "Dow lets you do great things." But, an older generation associates Dow Chemical as the maker of napalm, the fiery killer of the Viet Nam war. A much older generation remembers that, after the 1st World War, there was a great public outcry and bitterness toward the chemical and weapons companies as the "merchants of death."

Corporate advertising can create very complex legal and political issues involving tax laws, free speech, and partisan politics. Institutions, for example, have the freedom to promote their policies; however, they cannot always deduct the cost of "advocacy ads" as business tax deductions. At issue, then, is at what specific point does a "good will" ad become an "advocacy" ad? (Your local Federal Depository Library may have a copy of the government document sorting out the basic issues, a huge 2,200 page report: U.S. Senate's Subcommittee on Administrative Practice, *Sourcebook on Corporate Image and Corporate Advocacy Advertising.*)

"Public Relations" is another term for such institutional image building. Even non-profit organizations and governmental agencies (federal, state, city) usually have large "public information" departments whose job it is to publicize their "good news" and to minimize the bad news ("damage control").

Do corporations and institutions have the **right** to do such a one-sided presentation of their views? Yes. In a free country, everyone has the right to present their best case, "to put their best foot forward," to intensify their own good.

However, while everyone has the same right, not everyone has the same **ability**. The rich and powerful, for example, can afford to present their views on TV, or to hire the best persuaders, while the poor and weak cannot. Such an increasing **imbalance** is a relatively new problem. When our Founding Fathers created the country, the available technology of the printing press — the way of reaching the public — was cheap and common, equally available to all. Today, media access is very expensive.

Healthy Skepticism

Corporations and their products, governments and their functionaries, are always begging for our trust, our belief, our confidence in them. "Trust me" is the standard pitch of practically every politician and every product being peddled.

Who, then, can be trusted? Reach in your pocket and look at your money. The official motto of this country is "In God We Trust" — and the unofficial ending of it, hallowed in American folklore, is that bit of folk wisdom which says "All others pay cash!"

Such a folksy realistic attitude might be called a **healthy skepticism**. We can't **simply** trust someone who smiles at us, or purrs nice words ("environment... our heritage... caretakers"), if we know beforehand that such words are being crafted by persuaders who know what image needs to be created. In many cases, we have to "discount" these words, to withhold our belief, until we see the actions proving the words. We must avoid being either fools or cynics. Healthy skepticism is a moderate position which avoids the extremes of believing everything or believing nothing.

Most people, in their daily **person-to-person communication** with others, do avoid these extremes. They learn gradually, by experience, that different friends and acquaintances can be trusted, or not trusted, in varying degrees. Some people, however, when dealing with **corporate communication** (messages from advertisers and governments), take an all-or-nothing position. But, here too, we need a healthy skepticism.

We have to look for, and listen to, the various arguments and differing positions. For example, if the chemical companies say one thing about environmental issues, we have to see what is said by their critics — knowledgeable and informed outsiders, such as consumer groups, scientists, doctors, educators, and journalists.

Often, we don't have the time, or take the trouble, to investigate all of the specific claims made by the many possible persuaders in our society. So it helps us if we know about the **general principles** and **common techniques** used by any and all persuaders to establish a good image.

In a democratic society, this knowledge should not be restricted to the few, but known to the many. Everyone should know "the rules of the game." Education in a democracy should prepare all citizens with practical information and realistic attitudes to cope with the strategies and techniques used by modern persuaders.

Who can be trusted? It's possible for anyone to deceive or be deceived by such confidence-building techniques, but **awareness** of them provides our first line of defense and encourages a "healthy skepticism."

To recap: The most effective way to persuade is to gain the confidence of the audience by "projecting a good image," by seeming to be **expert**, **sincere**, and **benevolent**. Persuaders seek to put an audience in a good mood, to "feel good," in a variety of ways: by means of **words** and **nonverbals**, but especially through their choice of **presenters** (including people making testimonials and endorsements) who usually fall into two categories — **authority figures** and **friend figures**. **Brand names** and **trade marks** are some of the oldest and most obvious kinds of confidence-building techniques. Some of the newest techniques include the "**personal touch**" in computer-generated direct mail and telephone sales. Corporations also use image-building ads to make us "**feel good**" about them, and their policies, to project the benevolent image of being "**on our side**." Who can be trusted? It's possible to deceive or manipulate people by such confidence-building techniques, but awareness of them is a defense and encourages a "**healthy skepticism**."

Borderline Cases

"Line between public service, paid ads blur" reads the headline in an *Advertising Age* (Oct.8, 1990) article discussing the growing problem of the ethically "gray areas" as more corporate sponsors are presenting "public service" ads with their names attached (such as Burger King and Nike, as seen on Channel One). "The lines are being blurred by for-profit organizations who are trying to profit from non-profits," said Professor Don Schultz of Northwestern, "wrapping themselves in the cloak of 'public service' for corporate benefit." Closely related to this kind of "stay-in-school" campaign are the "moderation" and "responsible drinking" ads from the beer and liquor industries, and the "kids shouldn't smoke" ads from the tobacco industry. All of these are essentially self-serving "**feel good**" ads, designed as corporate image builders, and some are specifically designed to ward off criticism. As such ads increase, some advertisers fear that they will cause a backlash of widespread cynicism among consumers.

Advertorials are also increasing. These are ads in newspapers and magazines which *look like* editorial matter, giving the *illusion* by using the same type style, layout, design, or pictures as the news or articles. Advertorials are the printed equivalent of **infomercials.** (See p.121) Even though disclosure requirements exist ("Advertisement" must appear), sometimes the "small print" is not very noticeable. Sometimes, whole sections of a magazine will be a paid ad, but will look like an "objective" article.

Chapter Seven

DESIRE-STIMULATING

The two previous chapters focused on how ads get our **attention (Hi)** and get our **confidence (Trust Me)**. This chapter is about the way ads **stimulate our desires (You Need)** by promising benefits: a pleasure to be gained, a pain to be relieved, a posession to be safeguarded, a problem to be avoided. Advertisers often call this reason why people want something the "main selling point."

This chapter will discuss the **form** (**how** claims and promises can be *explicitly said* in words, or *implicitly suggested* in words and images) and the **content** (**what** are the appropriate and predictable concepts — relating to product-centered ads and to audience-centered ads).

Explicit/Implicit

Distinguish first between explicit, direct statements and implicit, indirect suggestions. Recognize that there are *very few* ads made up of explicit, direct statements, using words with precise and limited meaning. Except for some straight announcements (such as grocery store prices, or catalog-type lists and displays), very few ads are limited to factual information and direct explicit claims.

Explicit Claims

Examples of such direct, explicit words are presented mid-chapter in a set of **word lists** and commentaries about 12 general categories of advertising claims which are **product-centered**, covering nearly every conceivable thing which can be said about the intrinsic merits of a product: ***Superiority, Quantity, Beauty, Efficiency, Scarcity, Novelty, Stability, Reliability, Simplicity, Utility, Rapidity, and Safety.***

Explicitly, for example, a television commercial can state a claim in a few words: *"This product really works!"* However, most of the ad's message may be implied, being sent indirectly, and re-inforced by the presenter (a smiling celebrity) or the background visuals. Even if the TV audio were off, so that the explicit words couldn't be heard, the audience would still get the message. *Most* ads communicate their messages indirectly, by implicit suggestions, using richly connotative words, figures of speech, or a variety of nonverbal techniques.

Implicit Suggestions

Straight information-transfer (if that is the writer's goal) is best done with words of limited **denotation**, restricted meaning, precise and specific. However, other words are rich in **connotations**, that is, have multiple meanings, or are richly suggestive in our memory, based on past associations already existing within the language community. For instance, in our culture, the words "Thy" or "Thine" trigger "Biblical" associations. So also, thousands of words suggest much more than a simple definition or single meaning.

Ads commonly use words with many connotations which can suggest multiple messages indirectly, encouraging audiences to make inferences and co-create meanings.

Most ads send **multiple messages**. Some writers today use the term "sub-text" to describe an accompanying or underlying message, or even the "real" message, which is suggested simultaneously with the overt "surface" message. Furthermore, many messages are deliberately **ambiguous**. Because clarity is so often emphasized as a major criteria when we are learning to write straight expository writing, students sometimes transfer this criteria, erroneously, to other kinds of writing. For example, some students are disturbed by the indirectness of poetry ("Why didn't he just say that!") or the multiplicity of possible interpretations ("What does he mean? Is this the right meaning?"). Perhaps such questions come from an absolutist or bi-polar mindset (good guys/bad guys) encouraged by True/False tests. But, neither expressive writing, nor persuasion should be restricted to clear messages. Often, the very ambiguity of multiple possible meanings encourages the audience to co-create, to make inferences.

Implications and Inferences. This leads us to consider the **receivers** of the messages. (Senders imply, receivers infer.) In schools, again, we don't spend much time analyzing implications, even though in our everyday life, most of our language experience is involved in bits and fragments of conversation which we "put together" We fill in the gaps. **We infer. We co-create.**

People are always making **inferences** because we always perceive specifics, only parts of things and processes. Thus, our mind keeps making connections, filling in the gaps, based on our knowledge, prior experience, and probabilities. If we see an effect, we infer a cause. If we see a cause, we infer an effect. If we see a part, we infer a whole. If we see a whole, we infer a part. If we see one part of a process or sequence, we infer what went before and what will follow. If we hear someone complain about a "bad," we can infer that they hold the opposite to be a "good." If we hear an opinion (a conclusion), we infer the unstated premises.

We don't necessarily do this logically. We can err, make mistakes. (Logicians have labels for such errors: "jumping to conclusions, "guilt by association," *post hoc ergo propter hoc,*" and so on). But, in practice, most of our simple daily activities are based on inference-making from the bits and fragments, the specifics, we encounter.

We usually get along adequately with such haphazard inference-making. When we do make mistakes, often we get feedback and correct them, trial and error. So our "jumping to conclusions" is not necessarily wrong, unless an error is made, or we are deceived and lured into a faulty inference. Problems can occur with ads, however, which deliberately set us up to "jump to conclusions," to lure us into making faulty inferences.

Deception is possible in **any** situation (even with direct, explicit words), but it is **easier** to deceive — and be deceived — when messages are implied or suggested, and the receiver fills in the blanks. It's very difficult for regulators to control — or even identify — deceptive implications made with words and nonverbals. TV ads, for example, are dealt with on a case by case basis: after white-coated "doctors" were banned in OTC drug ads, other tactics have been used to suggest the same thing.

Words, Indirectly: Figures of Speech

We recognize that a good slogan — such as Chevrolet's "The Heartbeat of America" or United's "Fly the Friendly Skies" — is carefully crafted, out of the ordinary, and rich with favorable connotations and associations. And often, as we read the text of well written print ads, we recognize that the choice and arrangement of words goes well beyond simple, direct claims.

Classical rhetoricians have traditionally used the term "**figures of speech**" as a general term to describe any out-of-the-ordinary variation in the meaning of a word (**trope**) or in the arrangement of words (**scheme**). Quintillan defined a figure of speech as anything "artfully varied from common usage." In the past, scholars have labeled over 200 such variations with Greek and Latin names. But, today, except for a dozen or so terms (e.g. alliteration, assonance, rhyme) used in analyzing poetry, not much attention is given in schools to these ways of intensifying words.

Tropes commonly seen in advertising include: **simile** (explicit comparison, using "like" or "as" — "solid as a rock"); **metaphor** (implicit comparison — "Put a tiger in your tank"); **synchedoche** (a part stands for the whole -wheels" for car); **metonymy** (related attributes — "bench" for judges; "Wall Street"); **periphrasis** (descriptive phrase instead of the proper name — "The Real Thing"); **personification** (giving inanimate things human qualities —"Charlie" perfume); **apostrophe** (direct address to an absent person — "You ve come a long way, baby"); **onomatopoeia** (sound related "Plop, plop, fizz,fizz"); **oxymoron** (linking contradictories — "cool fire"); **rhetorical question** (indirect statement, no external response expected — "Aren't you glad you use Dial?"); **irony** (saying one thing, meaning another — context cues needed); **puns** (witty word play on similar sounds or meanings); **litotes** (understatement); and, very common in ads, **hyperbole** (overstatement, exaggeration).

Schemes (word order variations — adding, subtracting, repeating, or rearranging elements) commonly seen in advertising include: **parallelism** and **isocolon** (repeating similarities); **antithesis** and **juxtaposition** (opposing ideas put close together); **climax** (increasing order of importance); **parenthesis** (inserting ideas); **apposition** (adding modifiers); **ellipsis** (omitting items); **anaphora** (repeating openings); **epistrophe** (repeating endings).

You need not know all of the figures of speech by their traditional names. Nor do the ad writers who spontaneously write things like "Hot Diggety Dog!" (**tmesis** — interjection of a word between the parts of a compound word). But, the more conscious you are that such variations are possible and available to writers, the more control you'll have in your own writing. And, the more fun you'll have in enjoying the word play in ads.

Ads as the Poetry of the Corporation

We usually relegate the study of "figures of speech" to poetry, and we usually conceive of "poetry" as limited to certain topics and purposes. But, if we think of poetry as "intensified language" or as language using such "artful variations," then we might see advertising as a kind of poetry, patronized not by church or state, but by the corporation. Poetry — as we generally use the term — has had a long history of didactic purposes, of poets praising their patrons, church and state, upholding values and ideals, showing us heroes and villains. The purist might be upset by the commercial purpose of ads, the business transaction, but the *language techniques* of the copywriter praising soapsuds or cereal today are the same as those used by the poets pandering to the Elizabethan court.

Nonverbals

Visuals imply. On television and in magazine ads, much of the message is suggested rather than explicitly stated. Most commonly, ads won't **say** "you will have fun," but they will **show** pictures of people having fun. They will not explicitly **say** "you will be sexy" if you wear these clothes or use these cosmetics, but they will simply **show** sensual models in beautiful backgrounds. A well-made ad for McDonald's or Budweiser or Pepsi-Cola might have 40 or 50 quick-cut scenes and only a few words. On television, images are more powerful than words.

Multiplicity and ambiguity in these messages are common. Ads in fashion magazines may select young models carefully chosen to suggest, simultaneously, both — a sweet "innocence" and a sexy "experience." Or a luxury item may be linked with "usefulness"; for example, an expensive Range Rover may appear in an ad showing a rich young couple loading a basket of apples into their upscale station wagon.

Nonverbal communication was long ignored by scholars and has only recently been given the attention it deserves. Thus far, there's very little agreement about common terms (such as the list of common "figures of speech") to describe the many variations possible. New technologies and inventions keep introducing more ways to manipulate information.

The **Intensify/Downplay schema** provides a simple way of talking about many different nonverbal techniques. For example, we can intensify some things and downplay others by means of **camera angles** (close-up, panorama, birds-eye view), by **pacing** (slow motion, freeze frame, time-lapse), by **split-screen**, by **music**, by **sound tracks** (voice overs, ambient noise), by locations (spacing and distance, proxemics), by **background contexts**, by **colors** and **textures**, by the choice of **presenters** (beloved celebrities, beautiful people) and their actions (friendly smiles, welcoming gestures), and so on. All of these things can contribute not only to the information sent, but also to the emotional tone and feeling of a scene. When we see the "Credits" roll in movies, we become aware of the scores of people involved in all of these creative details. When watching ads, we have to remember that a 30-second spot is also the end product of a similiar complex process which scores of people may have taken months to put together.

To re-cap this section: our desires for benefits are stimulated by ads in which the claims and promises are either *explicitly* stated in words, or *implicitly* suggested by a great variety of verbal and nonverbal means.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Content

The **content** of advertising claims can be usefully divided into two major kinds, depending upon whether the emphasis is **product-centered** or **audience-centered.**

Product-Centered Ads (See pp. 59-73)

The traditional view of advertising (still held by some people) stressed the concept of a "maker" praising the product: an automobile manufacturer, for example, might focus on the "economy" or "utility" or "reliability" of its products. Such a business concept was closely related to the "better mousetrap" idea that all a business had to do was build a better product and consumers would eagerly seek it out. In the early 20th century, most American advertising was thus — product-centered. At best, it informed the public about the intrinsic merits of products. At worst, it made false or deceptive claims. Most commonly, it was characterized by superlatives and self-praise — "puffery."

Word Lists - Intrinsic Merits. The next section of the chapter presents word lists and commentaries about 12 general categories of advertising claims which are product-centered, covering nearly every conceivable thing which can be said about the intrinsic merits of a product: ***Superiority, Quantity, Beauty, Efficiency, Scarcity, Novelty, Stability, Reliability, Simplicity, Utility, Rapidity, and Safety.***

Audience-Centered Ads (See pp. 74-104)

By the middle of the 20th century, a major shift developed as advertising became increasingly audience-centered. The emphasis shifted away from the product's intrinsic merits (product-as-hero ads) and became more focused on human desires, on the needs and wants of a target audience. (In actual practice, some ads will be mixtures, overlaps, doing both simultaneously.) Often, the benefits promised to buyers were the "added values" — the **intangibles** — of status or prestige, or the promise of popularity or sex appeal, associated with the product. Such psychic benefits resided not in the product, but in the attitude of the buyer, in the emotional feelings, in the dreams and fantasies of the audience.

Word Lists - Intangibles. The rear section of this chapter presents word lists and commentaries about 24 general categories of such intangible human desires, covering nearly all the needs and wants analyzed by various psychologists and philosophers, such as: ***Food, Health, Sex, Security, Territory, Belonging, Esteem, Play, Curiosity, and Creativity.***

These are the **predictable categories** of product-centered ads and the words appropriate to certain categories and products. For example, if an ad is going to make a claim about a car, it's not going to use words such as "tasty" or "sweet," but words in such categories as *speed, economy, reliability, and safety.* With any product, there's a "'limited universe" or an "appropriate thesaurus" of related words. "That's obvious," you say. Yes. You know this, but most people know this vaguely and randomly. The more aware you are, the more systematically you can anticipate and identify predictable categories and words, the better analyst you can be.

In most ads, these ideas (the general categories) will probably be **suggested implicitily** by nonverbal images, rather than stated explicitly in words. For example, the "sex" category lists a few words which might appear in a print ad. However, in a magazine or on television, "sex" may be suggested simply by the smile of beautiful woman, or an undraped shoulder, or a lovers' exchange of glances in the background of a perfume ad.

(*Then, why not use images — pictures and sample ads — in this book?* Too expensive. Impractical for a small-press publisher. Once you grasp the principles, you can use current magazine ads or TV spots for examples.)

You need not memorize such lists, but **scan** these lists to get a sense of the words appropriate to each category, and read the explanatory paragraph, the commentary at the bottom of the list. Perhaps **read** these lists aloud, with enthusiasm ("*fan-tas-tic!*") and the sound of these words will trigger your memory and you'll recall how many times you've already heard these used in ads. More important, the next time you hear these words, you'll pay more attention to these patterns of persuasion.

(*Isn't this what advertisers want? For us to pay close attention to ads?* No. **Persuaders want response, not analysis.**)

Use these lists to analyze ads. For practice, start with print ads, in magazines, with lots of words. **Circle the content words** specific to the product. Notice also any "**qualifiers**" (p. 9) and the other generic function words: **attention-getters** (p. 38) and **confidence-builders** (p. 45), and words used for **urgency** (p. 109) and **response** (p. 115). Videotape some 30-second spots. Transcribe the text, or listen carefully for the key words. Soon these categories and the common clusters of them will become more obvious. Get an overview. Grasp the principles. Recognize that any specific ad will probably have a different emphasis, degree, and mix, than millions of other ads in the past and millions of other — as yet unwritten — ads in the future.

As you focus on the words, you are likely also to note the commonly repeated **visual cliches**: in car ads, the sleek new cars driving fast around curves on empty roads; in beer ads, the male-bonding scenes of buddies having fun, playing sports, and drinking beer; in soft drink ads, happy times at the beach.

SUPERIORITY

authentic
best
deluxe
excellent
exceptional
extraordinary
finest
first class
flawless
genuine
greatest
ideal
incomparable
magnificent
outstanding
perfect
prize-winning
prominent
spectacular
splendid
super
superb
superior
supreme
top-rate
tremendous
unbelievable
unsurpassed
ultimate
ultra-

SUPERIORITY

Superiority, as used here, refers to those words which intensify the high quality or excellence of the product or service. Claims are often made in terms of **comparatives** (better, more, -er) and **superlatives** (best, most, -est). Superlatives, especially vague, generalized praise and subjective opinions about superiority and beauty, are often called **"glittering generalities."** Most products and services use such superiority words. We assume and expect that everyone will intensify their own "good" when advertising or trying to persuade us. There are very few laws or restrictions against such vague self-praise; the law assumes that most people will recognize and discount such claims as the subjective opinion of the seller, as **"puffery."**

abundant
ample
big
bonus
bountiful
colossal
complete
economy-size
enormous
entire
extra
family-size
giant
huge
immense
includes
king-size
large
largest
many
more
most
numerous
roomy
spacious
stupendous
super
total
vast
wide variety...

QUANTITY

Quantity, as used here, refers to those words which intensify a large amount or number: in size, space, time, variety of styles, or number of services. Emphasis is on plenty, abundance ("more for your money") leading to a very commonly-held idea that "bigger is better." Often, when a large variety is offered, the key verbs will be "choose," "pick," "select" - as if the crucial decision to buy had been made already and now the only issue was the right choice.

- adorable
- attractive
- beautiful
- breathtaking
- charming
- comely
- cute
- dazzling
- delightful
- divine
- dramatic
- dreamy
- elegant
- fabulous
- fair
- glamour
- glamorous
- good-looking
- gorgeous
- graceful
- heavenly
- handsome
- lovely
- nice
- pretty
- striking
- stunning
- sweet
- tasteful
- wonderful

BEAUTY

Beauty, as used here, refers to those words which intensify the pleasure or delight provided by, or associated with, the product or service: beautiful objects, people, contexts. The definitions and criteria of beauty may be very subjective, may vary widely; but, everyone will have some set of general "praise words" to talk about "that which being seen, pleases."

EFFICIENCY

- ability
- able
- adept
- aids
- capable
- competent
- deft
- diligent
- does the job...
- effective
- efficient
- energetic
- fast-acting
- hard working
- heavy-duty
- helps
- industrious
- organized
- potent
- powerful
- productive
- proficient
- qualified
- really works...
- results
- solution
- solves
- strong
- sturdy
- tough
- works

EFFICIENCY

Efficiency, as used here, refers to those words which intensify ability and effectiveness: can it do the job? does it work? Often, strength and effort are related to such efficiency. In one sense, all persuaders say or suggest "I am the **means** to the end, the agent of the effect." But, some ads especially emphasize the function of the product or service as a **cause** of a desired effect: e.g., medicines, to stop pain or cure ills; cosmetics to enhance beauty. (FDA rules require some drug ads to use qualifiers - "helps... aids... may relieve... some.")

charter member
collector's item
distinctive
exceptional
exclusive
exclusively at
first edition
hard-to-find
infrequent
limited edition
limited supply
little-known
most treasured
most valued
one of a kind...
only here
only a few
original
personalized
quantity limited
rare
scarce
seldom seen
singular
special
uncommon
unique
unusual
while supply lasts
your very own

SCARCITY

Scarcity, as used here, refers to those words which intensify that which is rare or infrequent, or in limited supply. Scarcity is often linked with the urgency appeal: "hurry...only a few left." Although genuine scarcity might relate to only a few basic needs (food, air, shelter), many ads in the affluent society appeals to a common human desire to collect trinkets and treasures (coins, stamps, rocks, dishes, pictures). Often, millions of mass-produced "collector's items" are thus sold.

advanced
all new
amazing new
announcing
breakthrough
contemporary
discovery
exciting new
fashion
fashionable
first showing
fresh
future
introducing
introductory
just released
latest
modern
modernistic
new improved
novel
now
original
premier
recent
revolutionary new
state-of-the-art
style
stylish
timely
today's
up-to-date

NOVELTY

Novelty, as used here, refers to those words which intensify the newness or originality of a product or service. Today, new discoveries and products are very common. One of advertising's major benefits is the information which ads give about such new items: people need to be told these new things exist, their benefits, and how to use them.

aged
ancient
antique
classic
conservation
conserve
continuous
established
ever since
experience
for over ____ years
heritage
historic
history
mature
nostalgic
old-fashioned
old style
past
permanent
preserve
proven
ripe
seasoned
stabile
time-tested
tradition
traditional
tried and true
unchanging
yesteryear

STABILITY

Stability, as used here, refers to those words which intensify a favorable sense of the old and the past, a "conservative" appeal, especially in contrast to a "progressive" praise of the new and the modern. In our mobile, rootless society, the "search for roots" has a strong appeal, often reflected in ad campaigns.

RELIABILITY KEY WORDS

authorized
bonded
dependable
durable
endurance
enduring
expected
experienced
faithful
firm
fixed
identical
lasting
licensed
long-lasting
permanent
predictable
ready
reliable
repeated
same
secure
solid
stable
standard
steadfast
steady
sure
trustworthy
unchanging
uniform

RELIABILITY

Reliability, as used here, refers to those words which intensify the predictability and sameness of a product or service. Such reliability can relate either to time (same results from repeated use) or to space (same qualities in all of the parts): any emphasis on brand names or franchise names: e.g., "The best surprise is no surprise at all "(Holiday Inn); "You expect more from Standard, and you get it"; "You can be sure if it's Westinghouse."

SIMPLICITY

KEY WORDS

all-expenses-paid
all-included
automatic
beginner's
billed later
built-in
carefree
child's play
complete with
convenient
delivered
easy, ez
effortless
energy-saving
fingertip control
foolproof
hassle-free
instant
labor-saving
maintenance-free
one step
problem-free
ready to wear
simple
self-storing
smooth
step-by-step
time-saving
trouble-free

SIMPLICITY

Simplicity, as used here, refers to those words which intensify the easy or uncomplicated aspects of a product or service. The stress here is on being without effort, hardness, difficulty, or problems; not only in using it, but also in buying or maintaining. In our society (which has myths about the virtues of doing hard work, overcoming difficulties) some ads "give permissions" for such ease and convenience by stressing it as a reward for past goodness ("You deserve a break today") or stressing the positive aspects of time-saving and labor-saving.

- adjustable
- all-in-one
- all purpose
- basic outfit
- combination
- compatible
- convertible
- detachable
- double-duty
- down-to-earth
- dozens of uses
- essential
- fully-equipped
- functional
- go-anywhere
- interchangeable
- many-sided
- mix and match
- multi-purpose
- portable
- practical
- resourceful
- re-usable
- reversible
- sensible
- three-in-one
- useful
- variable
- versatile
- washable

UTILITY

Utility, as used here, refers to those words which intensify the usefulness and versatility of the product or service, usually as a **means** to do something else.

If a **fast** speed is desirable:

accelerate
brisk
expedite
fast
instant
jiffy
prompt
quick
rapid
ready
rush
speedy
sudden
swift

If a **slow** speed is desirable:

calm
deliberate
gradual
leisurely
long lasting
moderate
relaxed
restful
slow
slow burning
time-released

RAPIDITY

Rapidity, as use here, refers to those words which intensify the speed of a product or service. In most cases, a fast rate of speed is desirable, especially when the product or service is a **means** to an end: For example, quick-acting medicine, fast jet travel, fast-food service. In some cases, a deliberate slowness is desirable, especially when the product or service is an **end** in itself: for example, a leisurely ocean voyage, or an elaborate restaurant dinner.

SAFETY

KEY WORDS

- burglarproof
- care
- careful
- certain
- childproof
- fail-safe
- fireproof
- fire-resistant
- fire-retardant
- guard
- guaranteed
- harmless
- immune
- nonflammable
- protected
- pure
- resists
- rest assured
- risk-free
- safe
- safeguarded
- shatter proof
- shielded
- sure
- tested
- unadulterated
- uncontaminated
- unpolluted
- withstands
- worry-free

SAFETY

Safety, as used here, refers to those words which intensify the safe and harmless qualities of the product or service itself. Such safety words are commonly backed up today by testimonials by various certifying authorities: Good Housekeeping "Seal of Approval"; Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) FDIC insured.

Scare-and-Sell Ads

Advertising is generally the world of sunshine and smiles. Most ads are upbeat, cheerful, and positive. We usually see more smiling faces in a 30-second spot on TV than we do all day in reality. But, for every human hope and dream, there's also a corresponding fear and nightmare.

Some persuaders emphasize the negative by intensifying something "bad," such as a **problem**, pain, danger, or deprivation. Then, they offer the product or service as the **solution** — as something "good" to prevent, relieve, or solve the situation.

Although products sold for relief or prevention (such as medicines, auto tires, burglar alarms, insurance) are more likely to use this tactic, this negative approach can be used for any product. Listed below are brief word lists to illustrate how negative words — and the images and nonverbals they suggest — can be related to all categories.

Categories	**Examples of common "negative" or "attack" words used:**
Superiority	inferior, poor, bad, artificial, flimsy, shoddy
Quantity	inadequate, lacking, limited, skimpy, too few
Beauty	ugly, unsightly, revolting, disgusting
Efficiency	incompetent, inefficient, unskilled, disorganized, lazy
Scarcity	common, commonplace, mundane, trite, run of the mill
Novelty	outdated, obsolete, worn out, passe
Stability	untested, untried, inexperienced, new-fangled
Reliability	unreliable, untrustworthy, unpredictable erratic
Simplicity	complicated, complex, difficult, hard, worrisome
Utility	useless, impractical, limited, worthless
Rapidity	sluggish, slow, tedious, (or) rushed, hurried, hasty
Safety	unsafe, dangerous, harmful, poisonous, breakable

Other Ways

There are other ways of looking at claims in advertising. For example, if the message focuses on the **maker** (the source, the company, the manufacturer), it's predictable that the commonly repeated words will relate to the cluster of Superiority ("the best"), Quantity ("the largest"), Stability ("the oldest"), and Reliability ("trusted). The usual message about the **material** or the **design** will focus on Superiority ("best"), Quantity ("most"), Beauty ("beautiful"), Scarcity ("rare"), Novelty ("new"), Stability ("classic"), Reliability ("dependable"), and Safety ("safe"). The usual message about the **use** focuses on Efficiency ("really works"), Utility ("useful"), Rapidity ("fast-acting"), Simplicity ("easy"), and Safety ("safe").

Perhaps the simplest way of talking about advertising claims is merely to list the most commonly repeated words. Many books have offered such lists, usually based on some informed estimates. Some will claim that **"free"** is the magic word; others will swear that it's the combination **"exciting new."** For what it's worth, here's a list:

15 Most Repeated Advertising Claims

"exciting new"	(activity/novelty)
"fast acting"	(rapidity/efficiency)
"greatest"	(superiority)
"most"	(quantity)
"best"	(superiority)
"classic"	(stability)
"beautiful"	(beauty)
"only"	(scarcity/economy)
"easy"	(simplicity)
"practical"	(utility)
"free"	(economy)
"less than"	(economy)
"earn"	(economy)
"save"	(economy)
"take advantage of"	(economy)

Target Audience

Target audience considerations are very important in **attention-getting** (for the placement of ads in the right context) and in **confidence-building** (because different audiences respond differently to authority figures and friend figures). However, target audience considerations may be most important when the main strategy of an ad is to **associate** the product with **intangible** benefits.

The association technique basically links three elements together: (1) the **product**, with (2) something **already held favorably by, or desired by** (3) the **intended audience**. Thus, persuaders must first know what the intended audience likes and dislikes. What do people need? Want or desire? What motivates people? There s no absolute, agreed-upon, fixed list of human needs, but philosophers and psychologists have long studied human motivation and behavior. More recently, advertisers have spent billions — in opinion polls, surveys, questionaires, sociological and psychological studies — to find out what people want, what people like and dislike. Although such extensive research does not produce exact answers, we do know enough to predict probable patterns and common reasons for human behavior.

Here's a useful common sense set of 24 categories of human needs and wants, with their related key words as seen in audience-centered ads. You will recognize that these categories incorporate Maslows' list and others, not so much to create a rigidly fixed classification system as to illustrate the scope of human desires. Advertisers, in their very practical way, aren't interested whether these are really universal human needs, or merely very common ones. Expository writers, seeking to connect with their intended audience, are always interested in "common knowledge" — in what their audience already **knows.** Persuaders are more interested in what their target audience already **feels.**

Why are there so many stupid ads?

This common comment is not really a question, but an attack on ads which reveals a lack of understanding of several issues — of **context, emotional appeals**, and **target audience**. For example, sometimes an individual ad -in a larger campaign — may concentrate simply on attention-getting or image-building, with no claims about the product; such ads have to be analyzed in context. Some people want to restrict all ads to straight informational announcements about the product; such people don't understand the difference between information and persuasion, or the various non-rational means of persuasion: emotional appeals, image-building, association techniques. Other people don't understand the concept of target audience. For example, one recent ad featured an old lady crying out: "*Help, I've fallen and I can't get up*" — a catch-phrase which was widely mocked and ridiculed by the hip young, as a "stupid" ad. But, this ad was targeted at an elderly audience, selling a legitimate "protection" product (alarm device), related to their genuine needs and fears. Such mockery was interpreted by some as callous cruelty toward the old, but it's more likely due to egocentricity or ignorance. Another commonly-heard statement is that an ad "*insults my intelligence.*" Yes, many do. Not all ads are directed at people as intelligent as you!

Manipulating Human Hopes and Fears, Dreams and Nightmares

Before looking at the word lists, some general commentary may be useful to point up some **qualifications** (concerning mix, degree, and options) and some **problems** (concerning inequality, conflict, frustration, dissatisfaction, and fear) which are related to advertising manipulating our hopes and fears.

Today, in a society in which thousands of professional persuaders intensify the focus on some specific human need — for their own benefit — our sanity or mental health depends on our awareness of this situation. As we examine the techniques of the benefit-promisers, we should also reflect on **our roles as benefit-seekers.**

Mix. Different strokes for different folks. People have many needs, wants, desires, hopes, and dreams in common, but everyone has a different mix. Even though there are common clusters, everyone has a unique package. Furthermore, as individuals, many of our needs and wants change throughout the cycle of our lifetime from infancy to old age.

Degree. Not every need will be desired by everyone in the same degree. Sometimes we focus on one, or a few, of our possible needs and desires. Any need can be very intense, especially in a crisis. We are seldom aware of our breathing, for example, unless we are suffocating. "To a starving man," the old adage goes, "food is God." Any unfulfilled desire can be obsessive if we devote a great degree of attention and emotional energy to it. We speak of people being obsessed with sexual desire (or money or power) or of being overwhelmed with grief (or fear or loneliness), or being too dependent upon the approval of others.

Options. Not every single desire must be satisfied. People are flexible and adaptable. We can make adjustments, compromises, trade-offs. When some things are denied to us, or beyond our potential, we can compensate, sublimate, or re-direct our energy elsewhere. If one desire can't be fulfilled, we need not be stalled or immobilized.

Thus, while it is true that our many human needs and wants are being systematically stimulated by the benefit-promisers, we must qualify any generalizations, recognizing the great diversity of mix, degree, and available options to us as benefit-seekers.

Inequality. There's nothing intrinsically wrong with persuaders defining and analyzing their audience's needs and wants. It's reasonable, for example, if advertisers are going to spend money to persuade others, that the most economical and efficient ways be used. Part of a persuader's overall strategy includes an analysis of the attitudes already held by the intended audience. In our person-to-person communication, we all do the same thing — but in a rather amateurish, inefficient way — as we "size up" or "psych out" or try to understand the other person. The critical difference is the state of great **inequality** between the professional persuaders and the average person. Not only do the persuaders have the machines, and media access, but they've also rented many of the best psychiatrists and professors as consultants.

Children and teen-agers, for example, do not recognize that many of their emotional crises, their hopes and fears, are quite **predictable**. Just as a baby book can predict the physical growth and development of the child with great accuracy, so also a great deal is predictable about the emotional and intellectual development. Such knowledge of a child's hopes and fears is used by advertisers targeting ads at a "market" of three and four year old pre-schoolers.

But, even with advertising directed at adults, inequality also exists because most adults are not as skilled or as trained in persuasion techniques, or in the psychology of human behavior, as those professional persuaders in our society. Very few adults will admit to this. The most common adult reaction is the grand assertion, "*Advertising doesn't affect me!*"

We need to recognize our own dreams and fantasies, our hopes and desires: we want to belong, to be loved, to be happy, to be rich, to be famous, to do something, to lead the good life. We also need to recognize our own fears and nightmares: we don't want to be lonely, to be rejected, to be poor, to have pain. But, we seldom think of these things systematically.

Yet, the professional persuaders know that these hopes and fears exist in us, and they are rather systematic in their manipulation of them. If advertisers are accused of "selling dreams," we must recognize that they are our dreams. They are all genuine human desires. Persuaders don't create human needs. Without a single ad, people would still eat, drink, breathe, move, make love, seek friends and esteem. What persuaders do is intensify the focus, or channel the desire, toward some specific end.

Psychological problems can result from our constant exposure to persuaders working on our many human desires; as a result we can have conflicts, frustrations, fears, and dissatisfactions.

Conflicts. Sometimes we can't decide what's more important. Seldom do we have an easy decision between the obvious good and the obvious bad. Usually we have to choose between "the greater of two goods" or "the lesser of two evils." In the past, church and state often assigned clear-cut goals and guidelines for behavior: religious duty and secular duty were clear, attained by "obeying the rules" or "following orders" or "meeting one's quota." Today, some of these institutions and guidelines have broken down, and advertising acts as a new outside force, suggesting other *goals* ("You'll be happy...") and the *means* to achieve them ("... if you buy our product."). But, instead of one clear set of goals and guides, we are exposed to many competing and conflicting ones.

Frustrations. There are many things we simply can't have, or can't do. We don't have enough money or time or talent. We are limited, unable, incapable. As the noted British philosopher, Mick Jagger, said, "*You can't always get what you want.*" We have to decide which things are within our potency. Ads broadcast in the mass media are received by many people who are not the advertiser's target audience. While advertisers might regard such overlap as minor waste, or unavoidable "spillage" useless to them, the cumulative effect of such ads on people who are unable to afford the products may lead to personal frustrations. Such cases may be very common in our economy because credit-card buying obscures the borderline between the possible and the impossible. Millions of people are caught in debt cycles because there has been a blurring of what they really can afford.

Dissatisfactions. People can desire only that which they do not have. Once they get it, they can be either satisfied or not satisfied. Thus, if things do not live up to their expectations, anticipations, or idealized fantasies, then people can be disappointed, disillusioned, or dissatisfied. Kids are often disappointed when the toys they receive do not deliver the same fun and entertainment as seen on the television ads. In a broader sense, however, advertising has often been described as "revolutionary propaganda" because it constantly stimulates people to be dissatisfied with the *status quo*, to be discontented with what they have, and to want more. Again, our British philosopher, Mick Jagger, comments, in exisistential angst, "*I can't get no.... no, no, no .... satisfaction.*"

Fears. For every human hope or dream, there's a corresponding fear or nightmare. While such fears may be common and normal, they can be deliberately intensified by others. "Scare-and-sell" advertising is a term used in this book to describe ads which, in relation to our own benefit-seeking, promise either *relief* ("get rid of the bad") or *prevention* ("avoid the bad"). Most of these ads use a **problem/solution** pattern: a problem will be intensified, then the product will be offered as the solution. (Scholars call this "anxiety arousal and satisfaction.") This pattern is most obvious in ads which dramatize accidents and fires, then offer insurance or safety devices as the solution. Although scare tactics are relatively uncommon as a way of selling most acquisitions (where sunshine and smiles predominate), almost any product could be presented by focusing on negative aspects: the lack, omission, or reverse of the product. A sampling of "scare-and-sell" words follows the listing of 24 common categories of Intangible benefits.

Needs, Wants, and Desires: A Useful List and a Brief Commentary

Basic Needs

Food, Activity, Surroundings, Sex, Health, Security, Economy

People have basic needs, essential for survival. Food and water are obviously essential to individual survival, as sex is to the continuation of the species. But, our surroundings — a livable "air bubble" — physical activity, a healthy body, a secure environment, are also very basic. In a civilized society, money ("Economy") is so closely related, as a *means* to these other ends, that it is included here as one of the needs getting our high priority.

Certitude and Approval

Religion, Science, Best People, Most People, Average People

People have a strong desire for a sense of certitude and approval. We seek emotional security, support and reassurance from outside sources, that we are "doing right" and that the world makes sense. Such a stable worldview was once provided by a church, state, or social order: today, there is a growing lack of commonly-shared faith. While some believe strongly in their religion, others place more faith in science. Judging by the large number of testimonials, endorsements, and authority figures in ads, there seems to be a strong desire for outside re-assurance, either from experts and elites, or by conforming to what is popular in the group.

Space and Territory

Neighborhood, Nation, Nature

People have a sense of territoriality, a possessive relationship to the space around them. This can be imagined in terms of ripples, extending outward from the self: starting with close personal space ("my seat... my room... my house ... my parking space"), extending to the neighborhood (hometown, city, region) which one knows firsthand, to the artificial political boundaries of a nation, and finally to our relationship with the whole world of nature.

Love and Belonging

Intimacy, Family, Groups

People have a need to belong, to love and be loved, to be related to others in bonds of mutual care, to have a sense of "rootedness" in a family or a group. Such social bonding involves human relationships with relatives, friends, and in the group.

Other Growth Needs

Esteem, Play, Generosity, Curiosity, Creativity, Completion

Human behavior cannot be explained simply in terms of basic survival needs. Once people have satisfied certain basic needs, there are other human desires. Even though such higher needs, or growth needs, are hard to define or classify, there's a common agreement that people are motivated by such higher aspirations.

FOOD

appealing
appetizing
banquet
chewy
creamy
crispy
crunchy
cuisine
delectable
delicate
delicious
feast
flavorful
full-bodied
gourmet
homecooking
juicy
luscious
mouth-watering
rich
robust
savory
scrumptuous
smooth
spicy
sweet
tangy
tempting
tasty
tender
zesty

FOOD

Food is basic. Even without advertising, people still eat. But, the function of an ad is to direct our appetite toward a **particular product**, a **specific kind** of food, or **certain brand**. Taste is subjective, learned or acquired from many sources. Ads try to persuade us that their product has the taste (texture, smell) we like. Target audience for food ads used to be limited to the "homemaker" (often, the mother); but now, more snack-foods and fast food ads are directed at children.

ACTIVITY

action
active
adventure
agile
alert
alive
animated
buoyant
brisk
busy
dynamic
energy
enthusiastic
exciting
lively
nimble
perky
quick
radiant
robust
sparkling
sprightly
spry
thrilling
vibrant
vigor
vital
vitality
vivacious
young
youthful

REST, RELAXATION words:
calm
calming
gentle
mild
peace
peaceful
quiet
refresh
refreshing
relax
relaxing
serene
serenity
soothe
soothing
tranquil
tranquility

ACTIVITY

People need to be active. Our senses, our muscles need to be stimulated, to be used. Such activity, motion, and response is basic to life. Experiments in "sensory deprivation," in which people are cut off from all sense-input, demonstrate the importance of such vital activities. (Sleep and rest, in alternate periods, are also essential to the rhythm of life.) Nonverbal associations commonly used stress **movement,** motion, repetition, intensity, variety in music and visual images (e.g., hard-driving rock music, stirring march music, powerful symphonic music; flashing lights, bright colors; moving in patterns-bands, parades, dancers).

airy
aroma
bask
bundle up
cool
cooling
comfort
comfortable
comfy
cozy
cuddle up
fragrant
fresh
livable
mellow
mild
pure
scent
shelter
smooth
snug
soft
soothing
warm
warmth
windbreaker

SURROUNDINGS

People have an absolute need for an "air bubble" with adequate oxygen, within certain temperature ranges. We seldom notice our surroundings or environment until a threat appears, usually in terms of extremely hot or cold weather. Americans take for granted that their homes and stores will be heated in cold weather and cooled in hot weather. But, most people on earth today do not have such comfort. More recently, we have been threatened with air pollution (smog, ozone alerts) and radiation. Even when the extremes are avoided, there are degrees of comfort and pleasantness in our surroundings. Smells can penetrate our "air bubble" in a way that sights and sounds cannot: at times, unpleasant ("Smoking stinks!").

SEX KEY WORDS

- alluring
- amorous
- arousing
- attractive
- beautiful
- curvaceous
- desire
- earthy
- enticing
- erotic
- feminine
- flirty
- lover
- luscious
- lusty
- manly
- masculine
- passionate
- provocative
- romance
- saucy
- seductive
- sensual
- sensuous
- sexy
- smoldering
- stimulating
- tantalizing
- tempting
- virile

SEX

Sex is an intensely popular, pleasurable, pre-occupation with many people; thus, ads are quite likely to use as many sexual associations as the norms of a society tolerate. (Ads in some European countries are more overtly sexual, in Arab countries much less so, than in the USA.) Sexual associations tend to be vague, indirect, suggestive, pleasantly romanticized (young beauties) often appealing to our own desire to be more attractive, desirable to others (by purchasing the product!) Words are "soft" (vulgar words are rarely used), but nonverbals (esp. pictures) are the most commonly-used ways of association. Some critics claim that a "subliminal seduction" can occur with ads using "secret" sexual messages implanted; however, such a "conspiracy theory" diverts attention from our own genuine interest in sex, our own responsible choice, and the very obvious fact that ads try to associate their product with many other human needs and desires.

aids
alleviate the pain
assists
beneficial
benefits
cleans
cures
growth
heals
health
healthful
healthy
hygienic
hygiene
relief
relieves discomfort
remedy
restores
sanitary
well being

HEALTH

Good health is desired by all. When Aristotle wrote about "appearance" and "reality," he commented that most people would be content with the appearance of virtue, but wanted the reality of health. People seek to sustain life and to avoid pain. Although we know that pain is a protective warning signal to the body, most people would prefer an easier way of getting such information. When we're healthy, we're seldom aware of the absence of pain and often indifferent to protecting our health. But, when we're sick or in pain, we place a very high priority on stopping pain, on getting better. **Relief** from pain is one of the most powerful human desires; ads related to this must be very carefully considered.

SECURITY **KEY WORDS**

- assurance
- bulwark
- cover
- defend
- foresight
- freedom from worry
- guard
- peace of mind
- prevent
- prevention
- privacy
- protect
- protection
- rely on
- resist
- safe
- safeguard
- safety
- secure
- security
- shield
- take care of
- vigilant
- withstand

SECURITY

People seek security, protection from danger and threats ("to avoid the 'bad'"), as part of our basic need for self-preservation. As social animals, humans have organized societies for their mutual self-protection; often this function of their police and military is reflected in the language (National Guard, Department of Defense, "national security"). "Security" language is common in social and political persuasion. But, commercial advertising also used this language because there are many threats and dangers possible, and governmental protection is often limited or ineffective.

ECONOMY **KEY WORDS**

afford, affordable
bargain
budget, budget-priced
cheap
discount
down-to-earth prices
earn, earnings
economical
free
frugal
gain
gift
giveaway
inexpensive
invest, investment
just
less than...
low cost
money-saving
only...
prices cut
prize
profit, profitable
rebate
refund
reduced
sale
save, savings
sensibly priced
take advantage of...
thrift, thrifty
value, valuable

ECONOMY

Although money "can't buy happiness," it can buy some of the basic human needs, and perhaps some other pleasures in life. Money is a **means** to material goods; material goods are often presented as a **means** to non-material goods (esteem, belonging). Thus, most folks seek to get more money and try to keep or protect what they have. Even when we are asked to spend, ads emphasize that we are saving, a paradox explained by other implied factors such as "value," "investment," or comparative relationship ("all things considered"). Most ads downplay any hidden costs (upkeep, repairs, extras) and assure us of the wisdom of our purchase. Get-rich-quick schemes and con games exploit the human desire to get more money; gambling (lotteries, sweepstakes, contests, prizes) also appeals to a passive dream of easy money.

RELIGION

blessed
charitable
charity
dedicated
devout
faith
faithful
fervent
hallowed
holy
honorable
just
piety
pious
pure
reverend
righteous
sacred
saintly
truth
virtuous
worship
zeal

RELIGION

In a free society, with diverse beliefs and practices, persuaders are aware that religion is a very sensitive issue: at best, a transcendent experience, involving reverence, worship, and altruism; at worst, a tool to exploit others. Although association with religion is very common in political persuasion (the God-on-Our-Side theme; the linking of opponents with the devil), such heavy-handed association is not common in commercial advertising using **national** mass media in the USA. But, there's a great deal of such linking at the **local** level (church bulletins, religious radio programs) used to inform specific target audiences that certain products or sponsors are "one of ours," and, conversely, that certain others should be boycotted.

SCIENCE KEY WORDS

analyst
bionic
clinically tested
computer
documentation
electronics
experiment
laboratory
mechanics
medically proven
research
scientific
scientists
space age technology
state of the art
studies
technical
technicians
technology

SCIENCE

Some say that science has replaced religion, in the sense that some people have an almost-worshipful attitude toward scientific authority and technological progress which seems to promise cures, solutions, and a better life. Associating things with science and technology can also create the sense (or the illusion) of accuracy, certitude, and truth. **Non-verbal** images suggesting scientific authority are very common (labs, microscopes, complex machinery, computers, print-outs, synthesizer music) as is the use of **jargon** and shop talk from many scientific and technical areas (including psychology, computers, space technology). Together with scientific-sounding words using Latin prefixes and suffixes (mega-, mini-, micro-, hyper-, —ics, -ite, -ate), abbreviations and acronyms (DX7, Formula R2D) and statistical data, there is a widespread use of science to lend prestige to many products and services.

BEST PEOPLE **KEY WORDS**

- acclaimed
- aristocratic
- award-winning
- celebrated
- celebrity
- champion
- cosmopolitan
- elegant
- elite
- eminent
- esteemed
- exclusive
- expert
- expertise
- famed
- famous
- fashionable
- illustrious
- important
- leaders
- leadership
- noted
- noteworthy
- prestige
- prestigious
- profession
- professional
- renowned
- significant
- society
- urbane
- winners

BEST PEOPLE

Every era, every culture, every group has its own **elite**, people who are leaders, who are admired and esteemed by others: e.g. movie stars, millionaires, athletes, artists, popular singers, the "jet set," "high society," celebrities. Sometimes this aristocracy is due to wealth, birth, or beauty; sometimes it's a "natural aristocracy" based on virtue or talent, the personality and achievements of a person rather than any unearned gifts. Every group will have those esteemed leaders, heroes or experts, who lend authority, certitude, or prestige to that which is associated with them.

MOST PEOPLE **KEY WORDS**

beloved by all
best-selling
blockbuster
common agreement
commonly
consensus
entire
famed
favorite
general
generally accepted
majority
more people
most people
popular
popularity
prevailing
total
universally
well beloved
well liked
widespread

MOST PEOPLE

Often called the "**bandwagon**" appeal (an old-time metaphor of crowds jumping aboard the bandwagon of winning politicians), this category emphasizes the idea of large numbers, of doing what "most people" would approve. Such **popularity** appeals may be strongest in democratic societies which place high value on majority rule, and perhaps most intense in modern America, which Riesman has described as being "other directed," that is, very concerned with the opinions and approval of other people (rather than "inner-directed" or "tradition-directed"). Such **peer-pressure,** ("being popular," "one of the guys") is seen throughout society, but especially in persuasion directed at gathered groups (rallies, parades, demonstrations) or relying upon the authority, prestige, or certitude conferred by large numbers of people: "everyone's doing it." Today, it's very common to cite polls, such as the Harris poll, Nielsen ratings, Arbritron ratings, and various straw polls.

AVERAGE PEOPLE KEY WORDS

average
common
common sense
customary
down home
familiar
folk
folksy
genuine
horse-sense
hospitality
main stream
moderate
moderation
normal
ordinary
plain folks
rank and file
regular
salt-of-the-earth
simple
sincere
typical
usual

AVERAGE PEOPLE

Often called the "**plain folks**" appeal, this category stresses the concept of "normality" or "typicality." Many people see themselves as being "typical," "normal," or "average." Thus, they would have empathy with, and be reassured by support or statements (testimonials, endorsements) made by other "normal" people. Sometimes the "average person" is personified abstractly (e.g., in America, John Doe or John Q. Public; in Russia, Ivan Ivanovich; in China, Chang San). This appeal is related also to the "underdog" fantasy of the unknown person doing something heroic, being worthwhile: the benchwarmer winning the game, the understudy's debut in opera, the "ugly duckling" making good. "Plain folks" can be suggested by man-in-the-street interviews, "snapshot" pictures, cinema-verite movies (handheld camera, grainy film), "Plain" models, and use of folk sayings, adages, maxims, and folklore.

NEIGHBORHOOD

- belong
- belonging
- civic
- close
- community
- downtown
- friendly
- grassroots
- hometown
- local
- nearby
- neighbor
- neighborhood
- neighborly
- region
- regional

NEIGHBORHOOD

People love the familiar, the known, the near-by. One of our strongest ties to space and territory is the feeling we have for that specific region we consider our "neighborhood" or "home." Hometown pride is common ("Support your hometown merchants... Shop in your neighborhood... Local boy makes good"), but is not limited to rural, small towns. All major cities have groups organized to promote civic pride, business, and tourism (via festivals, parades, songs, slogans, symbols, souvenirs). While some may criticize this as provincialism, such civic pride is also the basis for much of what we treasure: museums, libraries, the arts. The history of civilization is the history of the city.

NATION **KEY WORDS**

allegiance
citizen
country
father land
free
freedom
homeland
honor
independence
land
liberty
loyal
loyalty
national
patriot
patriotic
serve
service
sovereignty

in common phrasings (USA):

American dream
American heritage
American system
American way of life

in ads:

"Sears, where American shops"
"The Heartbeat of America" (Chevrolet)
"America spells cheese, K-R-A-F-T"

NATION

When modern nationalism emerged in Europe, groups put more emphasis on the artificial political boundaries created to divide the land. Boundaries have often changed since then, but the idea of nationalism has continued. Sometimes nationalism is linked to religion, especially in "holy wars" against the foreign "devils." Nationalism is often linked with politics and economics: capitalist countries idealize "free enterprise" (downplaying corporate corruption, price-fixing, bribery); socialist countries idealize "cooperation" (downplaying government coercion, corruption, privileged classes). Nations use symbols (flags, colors), songs (anthems, marches), and slogans to indoctrinate citizens. This is most intense during war or crisis when external enemies can be attacked, and citizens are pressured to prove their patriotism. "Flag-waving" in ads -- linking the product or policy with patriotic appeals -- is common, especially when domestic companies have foreign competition: e.g., "Keep America free from dependence on foreign oil."

NATURE **KEY WORDS**

animals
beach
earth
farm
field
forests
frontier
idyllic
lake
moon
mountains
ocean
organic
outdoors
pastoral
plains
prairies
primitive
rainbow
rustic
sea
shore
sky
streams
sunny, sunshine
untouched
unspoiled
untamed
wild, wilderness
wildlife
woods

NATURE

In the widest sense of "space" or "territory," people have a need to relate to nature, to the whole universe. The earth is beautiful and delightful to our senses. Art and writings of all cultures indicate that people respond to the beauty of the oceans, the mountains, dense forests, open plains, autumn leaves, spring flowers, sunsets, rainbows, moonlight, starry nights, snowfall, surf, and the animals which share life with us. People often romanticize nature with dreams of a tranquil, pastoral scene, a pleasant Arcadia, a garden of Eden paradise (downplaying the "bad" realities: storms, wild animals, "Nature red in fang and claw").

INTIMACY

KEY WORDS

affinity
attract
beloved
bond
care
caring
closeness
commitment
couples
dear
desire
darling
embrace
feelings
friend
friendly
heartfelt
heartwarming
intimacy
intimate
love
lover
partners
meaningful
personal
sharing
sweet
tender
touch
thoughtful
trusting
understand

INTIMACY

A close, intimate relationship with another person is an important human desire. We seek to avoid loneliness and isolation; we seek a genuine love, without fear of rejection. Frequently, such ideal intimacy is linked with the ideals of marriage or of sexual partners, but not all marriages or sexual relationships are so intimate. Perhaps the idea of a "very close friend" might be closer to this ideal of intimacy. Generally speaking, true intimacy is **rare** in any human situation. But the words which promise intimacy, or create an illusion of intimate behavior, are **common** in advertising because they touch on such deep human desire.

care, caring
domestic
down home
family, family style
fireside
hearth
home
home grown
home maker
home made
home spun
hospitality
kitchen
nurture
protect
responsibility
serenity
sharing
togetherness
tranquil
Family relationship names:
Mother, Mom, Ma
Father, Pop, Pa
child, children, kids, baby
son, daughter
Grandma, Gram, Grannie, Nana
Grandfather, Grandpa, Gramps
Aunt, Auntie, Uncle, Sissie
Nicknames, pet names (Skipper, Kit)
Diminuitives (Jimmy, Davy, Lizzie)

FAMILY

Although the "Mom and Apple Pie" stereotype of domestic pleasures is an exaggeration, it does touch on some of the most important human relationships of love and bonding, nurturing and caring within the family. The "public image" of family life is highly idealized: happy, cooperative people with solvable problems. But, many real families have more difficult problems: child abuse, neglect, debts, divorce, hostility, and neurotic behaviors. Thus, when we see the "ideal" family in ads and on TV, we envy the illusion, desire the dream. Factory-made, mass-produced foods often seek to be associated with "home-made" virtues. Many other products also promise benefits both for the buyer (in role of provider and protector) and for the family: "you'll be a better parent, if you buy this for the family."

GROUPS KEY WORDS

associate
association
belong, belonging
buddies
common
companion
congenial
cooperate
cordial
fellowship
friend
group
guest
harmony
help, helping
hospitality
host
invitation
involved
like
loyal
loyalty
mutual
pals
sociable
social
team spirit
teamwork
together
united
unified

GROUPS

People are social animals. We want to belong. We often identify ourselves as being members of a certain group. People differ in the degree of identification they have with groups. Often, people with low self-esteem can get feelings of self-worth by emphasizing affiliation with a group, by being dedicated to a team,or to a cause for a group. **Natural** groups are those we belong to without choice (race, sex, age, background, being handicapped or gifted); **Choice** groups are our voluntary associations: Scouts, Little League, social clubs, colleges, athletic teams, political parties, religions, cults, occupation, and hobbies. We choose to identify ourselves as being part of certain groups, often ignoring or downplaying our membership in other categories.

ESTEEM KEY WORDS

acclaimed
admire
appreciated
approved
champion
cherished
chief
dominant
expertise
famous
foremost
hero, heroic
honor
honored
important
influential
leader
leadership
mastery
noted
noteworthy
prestige
prestigious
prized
prominent
recognized
regarded
respect
revered
success
valued

ESTEEM

Esteem is a social need. We seek to be recognized and valued by others. Both dominance and submission are involved in a social order. Aggressive behaviors are encouraged by emphasis on esteem, leadership, winning, competition, and dominance. Submissive behaviors are encouraged by emphasis on belonging, joining, fitting in, being accepted, altruism, loyalty to the group, teamwork, and generosity. In a society which is "open," not rigidly ordered, ads often stress upward mobility (improve, get better); products promise a raising of social status. Seeking unobtainable goals can cause serious dissatisfaction. Fortunately, we have the option of seeking esteem in many different groups or categories, or seeking other needs or desires in the place of positional goals.

amuse
amusement
amusing
celebrate
celebration
cheerful
diversion
enjoy
enjoyment
entertain
entertainment
fun
funny
get away
glad
happy
happiness
hilarious
jolly
joy
joyful
merry
party
play, playful
pleasant
pleasing
pleasure
recreate
recreation
refresh
refreshing

PLAY

Playful behaviors can be observed in several species of higher animals, but human play is distinctive for its wide diversity and the relatively great amount of time devoted to such non-utilitarian ends. We spend a lot of time and effort in fun and games. Advertising includes promos for movies and concerts; ads for CDs, video games, pleasure travel and package tours. Play activities can range from the solitary imagination to elaborate commercial playgrounds, such as Disney World. Perhaps play is more "useful" than it appears: activity is beneficial to the healthy well-being of the body; curiosity is stimulating to the mind. Play can be a release of tensions, and a rehearsing of roles or modeling behavior, often a bonding of people in group activity.

aid
altruistic
appreciate
appreciated
beloved
benevolent
care
caring
charitable
charity
cherished
delighted
generous
gift
give
gratitude
grateful
help
helping
keepsake
loved ones
pleased
remember
reward
serve, service
share
sharing
treasure
treat

GENEROSITY

Giving away runs contrary to the human desire to possess, but such generosity is often considered a higher human virtue. At best, gifts are symbolic expressions of love, altruism, and bonding in the social order. However, not all gifts are given so freely or without some kind of strings attached. **Reciprocity** gifts (quid pro quo, "tit for tat") are those which expect some kind of return favor, perhaps some kind of gratitude, thanks, or approval. **Guilt** is another reason for giving, an attempt to "pay back" or "make up," for an offense or an omission. Such giving involves a sense of debt, duty, or obligation. Ads stress the **gratitude** of the receivers and the reward for the givers: "She'll be pleased, delighted, grateful... She'll remember, treasure, appreciate your thoughtfulness, concern, etc." Our gift-giving days include Christmas, birthdays, Mother's Day, Valentines Day, weddings, anniversaries, and graduations.

CURIOSITY KEY WORDS

adventure
"backstage"
"behind the scenes"
discover
discovery
educational
engaging
engrossing
explore
exploration
expose
fascinating
find out
inform
informative
ingenious
inquisitive
"inside story"
intelligent
interesting
intriguing
investigate
investigation
learn
learning
news
newsworthy
reveal
revelation
secret
uncover

CURIOSITY

People want to know, to find out about the unknown. Such curiosity (very important for the species) ranges from scientific investigation to gossip. We are interested in what is going on around us, what happened in the past, and what will happen in the future. Educational systems (such as schools, libraries, newspapers, TV) help keep us informed, stimulate our intellect, appeal to our curiosity, and reduce our boredom when we are not stimulated enough. People are curious about the secrets of others, the unknown or hidden aspects of family, friends, or famous celebrities, about the unusual, the atypical, the exotic, the far away; about the future: prophecy, predictions.Ads for books and magazines, encyclopedias and on-line information services usually appeal to our human desire to know more.

CREATIVITY KEY WORDS

architect
artist
artistic
author
avant-garde
build
builder
composer
composition
craft
craftsmanship
creative
creativity
creator
culture
cultural
design
do
dramatic
energy
imagine
imagination
invent
inventor
make
maker
original
plan
skill
talent
work

CREATIVITY

While only a few people (such as a Beethoven, or an Edison) are usually labeled as "creative," millions of people have created new things. Creativity isn't limited to a few people or to certain areas: the essence of creativity is making something new. People need to feel that their work is important, significant, useful or unique. We have a desire for "living on" or "immortality," which we gain when we create new things. Many ads, however, tend to separate "creativity" from our normal work life, and to restrict it to words and images associated with the fine arts, or to pre-packaged entertainments which sell the illusion of creativity.

COMPLETION **KEY WORDS**

achieve
achievement
accomplish
climax
closure
conclusion
contentment
end
finish
fulfill
fulfillment
goal
graduate
mature
maturity
perform
performance
perfect
perfection
reach
ripe, ripeness
satisfaction
satisfy
solve
solution
succeed
successful
synthesis
whole

COMPLETION

People have always been workers, builders, makers, creators, and problem-solvers. One of the joys we have is that of "**closure,**" of completion, of getting a job done, or a problem solved. When something is undone or incomplete, people often feel a strong desire to close, to reach a conclusion, to achieve a goal. **Success** in human achievements can vary widely in kind and degree, from a national effort (a space mission) to individual efforts (school graduation), or even entertainments (solving puzzles, riddles, mysteries). Two common kinds of ads relate to completing a set or a sequence: (1) ads for "**collections**" (coins, books, plates) expect many to start and some to complete; also, some products (dolls, toys) are designed to encourage the purchase of extras and accessories; (2) ads for "**improvement**" items (dance, diet, job) relate to an endless cycle of "getting better."

Scare-and-Sell Ads

Some persuaders emphasize the negative by intensifying something "bad," such as a **problem,** pain, danger, or deprivation. Then, they offer the product or service as the **solution** — as something "good" to prevent, relieve, or solve the situation.

Although products sold for relief or prevention (such as medicines, auto tires, burglar alarms, insurance) are more likely to use this tactic, this negative approach can be used for any product. Listed below are brief word lists to illustrate how negative words — and the images and nonverbals they suggest — can be related to all categories.

"Added Values"

Category	**Examples of common "negative" or "attack" words used"**
Food	bland, tasteless, unappetizing, harsh, bitter
Activity	inert, passive, dull, lazy, feeble, lethargic
Surroundings	scorching, sweltering heat, biting cold, foul air
Sex	unattractive, undesirable, frigid, impotent
Health	pain, suffering, sickness, unhealthy, unclean, dirty
Security	loss, death, disaster, calamity, tragedy, accident
Economy	loss, cheated, overcharged, worthless, being taken
Religion	sinful, profane, blasphemous, sacrilegious, impious
Science	inaccurate, illogical, unsubstantiated, superstitious
Best People	common place, mediocre, second-rate, run of the mill
Most People	unpopular, unwanted, unliked, unknown
Average People	odd, oddball, strange, snob, arrogant
Neighborhood	stranger, outsider, intruder, trespasser, newcomer
Nation	foreigner, alien, traitor, disloyal
Nature	artificial, unnatural, pollution, polluted
Intimacy	unloved, unwanted, rejected, misunderstood, lonely
Family	disowned, unwanted, uncaring, irresponsible
Groups	outsider, outcast, unfriendly, excluded, detached
Esteem	insignificant, loser, unknown, overlooked, nobody
Play	sad, solemn, austere, joyless, dull
Generosity	stingy, cheap, miserly, selfish, self-centered
Curiosity	boring, apathetic, shallow, uninterested, dull
Creativity	unimaginative, unoriginal, imitative, untalented, lazy
Completion	fail, quit, abandon, incomplete, frustrated

SOME STANDARD PHRASING

Some standard phrasing is found in many ads: asserting that a benefit exists, or that the buyer (or other) desires it, or that it produces the desired effect (satisfaction). These are often phrased as direct commands, or in variations such as negatives and rhetorical questions.

Actual use of these standard phrases varies with the situation. Direct commands, for example, as if they were orders or imperatives coming from a parent figure or an authority figure, are part of the "hard sell." As such, they may be less common on television than in person-to-person selling when the persuader senses that the buyer will tolerate or submit to such commands. However, most people in unfamiliar situations (such as travel or car repairs) will accept very strong directives offered as tips, advice, or guides.

ASSERTING A BENEFIT:
Save (time, money, effort)...
Get (a specific benefit)...
Improve... Be more... Be better...
Enjoy...
Stop... Solve... Prevent... Avoid... (a problem)

DIRECTIVES, DIRECT COMMANDS:
You need...
You should get...
You must have...
You ought to...
You have to...

VARIATIONS — NEGATIVES AND RHETORICAL QUESTIONS:
Don't be disappointed...
Don't worry...
Don't be sorry...
Need it? Want it?...
Wouldn't Mom be pleased?...
Shouldn't you really have?...
Avoid disappointment...
Don't you deserve it?...

ASSERTING DESIRE:
Just what you've always wanted...
Everything you desire in...
What you've always hoped for...
Just what you expected from...
Everything you've dreamed of...

ASSERTING SATISFACTION:
You'll enjoy...
You'll be pleased...
You'll be happy...
You'll love...
You'll like...
You'll be satisfied...

ASSERTING SATISFACTION AND DESIRE BY OTHERS: (Gifts)
Your family needs...
The kids will love...
Show them you care...
She'll be pleased...
He'll enjoy...
Delight your family...
Reward them with...
Your dog will love...

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To recap: The main part of "the pitch" is concerned with benefits. As benefit-seekers, human behavior can be described in terms of **protection** (Keep the "good"), **acquisition** (Get the "good"), **relief** (Change the "bad"), and **prevention** (Avoid the "bad"). Advertisers, as **benefit-promisers**, direct their appeals to these by making certain **claims** and **promises**. In **form**, claims are made in ads, either *explicitly stated* by words, or *implicitly suggested* by words or nonverbals. Ads commonly use richly connotative words and figures of speech (tropes and schemes) which can suggest multiple messages, encouraging audiences to make inferences and to co-create meanings. The **content** of advertising claims can be divided into two major kinds: product-centered and audience-centered. Claims can be about the **intrinsic merits** of their products (superiority, quantity, beauty, efficiency, etc.) or suggest some **"intangible benfits"** by associating their product with some human needs and wants (such as food, sex, security, belonging, esteem) already desired by the audience. Word lists itemize 12 common categories of intrinsic qualities often seen in product-centered ads and 24 common categories of intangible benefits often seen audience-centered ads.

To Analyze an Ad, Ask these Key Questions:

- **Who is the target audience?** Are you? (If not, as part of an unintended audience, are you uninterested or hostile toward the ad?)

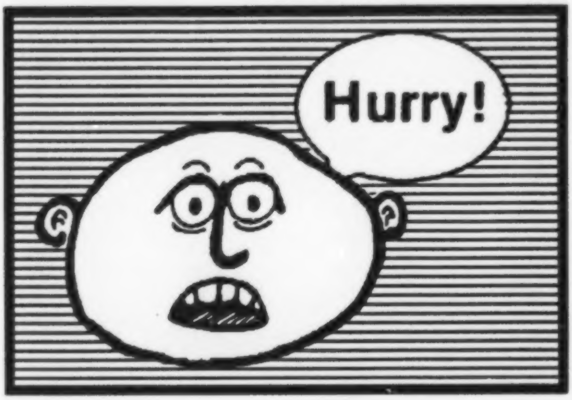
- **What is the primary motive of that audience's benefit-seeking?**

Use chart at right. Most ads are simple acquisition. Often motives, co-exist, but one may be dominant.

To keep a "good" (protection)	To get rid of a "bad" (relief)
To get a "good" (acquisition)	To avoid a "bad" (prevention)

- **What kinds of product claims are emphasized?** (Such as superiority, quantity, efficiency, beauty.) With what key words and images? Any measurable claims? Or are they subjective opinions, generalized praise words, puffery?

- **Are any "added values" implied or suggested?** Are there words or images which **associate** the product with some "good" already loved or desired by the intended audience? With some common human needs/wants/desires such as food, activity, sex, esteem, and so on.



Chapter Eight

URGENCY-STRESSING

Creating a sense of urgency is common in **some**, but not all, advertising. In this book, the five-part pattern of "the pitch" is presented as the basic pattern of advertising, even though some ads **do not** use an urgency plea (#4 — **"Hurry"**), **or even** an explicit call for action (#5 — **"Buy"**). However, using this five-part pattern emphasizes that the ultimate purpose of advertising is the response, even when the full pattern isn't obvious. By attempting to apply this full pattern, you are more likely to notice any omissions; to distinguish between "command propaganda" and "conditioning propaganda"; and to recognize some varieties of conditioning such as "soft sell" and "image building" ads.

Urgency can be expressed in common **words** *(hurry, rush, now, last chance)* or in "crossroads" **metaphors** (decision time, critical point, junction, now-or-never, either/or), or in **nonverbal cues** (clocks, beating drums, quickening tempo in music, staccato sounds, countdowns, or images of motion). Although basically concerned with **time**, urgency pleas are often clustered with concepts of **scarcity** (lack of quantity) and **availability** (chance, opportunity).

Command Propaganda — as used here — means persuasion which seeks an **immediate response**, often using an urgency appeal. (NOW!) For example, "the pitch" is used here to describe the most common pattern of command propaganda in commercial advertising. In political persuasion, persuaders urging immediate action (vote, fight, join) sometimes use this same pattern, or sometimes a closely-related pattern (the "pep talk") stressing group-bonding.

Conditioning Propaganda — as used here — means persuasion which seeks to mold public opinion, assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes — on a long-term basis, as the necessary climate or atmosphere for a **future response**. (LATER) Arguments about "conditioning propaganda" point up that the borderlines between information and persuasion are often murky.

Because urgency appeals seek an emotional response, often this tactic is used to sell items people would not buy after thoughtful consideration, or listening to advice from others. Some urgency claims are genuine. Some stores really do go out-of-business! But, many urgency claims are contrived and artificial. Such claims are designed to rush us into action: to buy something, to do something, or to believe something, without adequate thought.

Logically, the urgency appeal seeks to create a **contradictory** relationship (either/or) instead of a **contrary** relationship in which other options are available. Psychologically, the urgency appeal seeks to increase our anxiety about losing a benefit. The urgency plea tries to force an issue into a crisis, and to narrow the options to two: yes or no, stop or go, buy or not. Although such a tactic probably forces some people to choose "no," to decide against the persuader, it can also force a certain number to choose "yes."

Young people, for example, are often rushed into buying a more expensive car than they can afford, lured by the "low, low monthly payments" of long-term credit. But, a five year contract can be a heavy burden for a young person earning low wages. After a while, it seems that the car owns the person, rather than the other way around. No age is immune to the urgency plea. Retired people are often exploited by the "hard sell" involved in time-share condos and vacation clubs. Such real estate schemes often promise huge "discounts" for signing contracts offered "Today, only!"

Some FTC regulations exist for a 3-day "cooling off" period, and a possible refund, in certain situations in which an uninvited seller comes into the home. But, generally speaking, it's almost impossible to get out of a written contract. Thus, the basic rule of thumb is: **never, ever, sign any contract when sellers use any kind of urgency plea.** Sellers will try to persuade you that you'll "lose a once in a lifetime opportunity." But, in 99 of 100 cases, let the buyer beware!

Advertisers and politicians are not the only persuaders to use urgency pleas. Poets and lovers have traditionally urged their beloved ones to "seize the day." *Carpe diem.* Folk sayings, too, encourage us to "strike while the iron is hot" and that "fortune favors the bold." Alas, folk sayings also tell us that "haste makes waste" and "fools rush in where angels fear to tread."

URGENCY

Act now
Available only
Beat the crowd
Clearance
Come in now
Deadline
Decide now
Do it now
Don't delay
Don't hesitate
Don't miss out
Don't wait
Enter now
Final close-out
Go for it
Going fast
Going out-of-business
Golden opportunity
Hurry
Last chance
Last two days
Limited offer
Never again
No later than
Now is the time
Now or never
Offer expires
Opportunity knocks
One day only
One week only
Once in a lifetime
Only five left
Only 7 shopping days until Christmas
Promptness bonus
Prices going up
Rush
Sale
See it today
Time is of the essence
Time running out
Today only
Weekend sale

"Hard Sell" & "Soft Sell"

Some people distinguish between **"hard sell"** and **"soft sell"** advertising depending whether or not there is an urgency plea. Others use the term "hard sell" more broadly to suggest any kind of aggressive techniques, such as salespeople who brow-beat customers in person-to-person selling. Much of the bad reputation of the advertising industry has been caused by the abuse of urgency techniques, by the "hard sell" and "fast hustle" of unscrupulous fly-by-night operators, who "take the money and run."

"Hard sell" marketing can be seen on the various **"shopping clubs"** on television. They create a sense of urgency by the use of words ("hurry, only a few left, only a few minutes, last chance") and many nonverbals (count-downs, flashing lights, tooting horns, sirens, timers clicking off, "Seconds left" or "Items left") interspersed with "special discounts" and testimonials from "satisfied customers." All the while, enthusiastic announcers, cheerleaders, stroke the vanity of buyers by praising their choices ("You really picked a beauty, a real bargain ...") and mentioning their names on TV. These programs, which may seem corny or vulgar to some viewers, have been very successful in selling millions of dollars of junk jewelry and ceramic knicknacks to a large audience, many of whom are "compulsive shoppers," an easy prey for a "hard sell."

Some advertisers claim a kind of moral superiority because they use the **"soft sell."** For example, some expensive retail stores pride themselves on low-key ads and non-aggressive sales clerks. But, there are many situations in which the "soft sell" is simply more appropriate and more effective than any pushy strategy. Some sellers of expensive items (such as autos, homes, major appliances) often encourage their audience to "shop around and compare prices." This is a safe strategy here because most people do comparison shopping for these items anyway.

Standard consumer items (such as foods and necessities) can also use a **"soft sell"** effectively because they depend on **long-term repetition**. Campbell's Soups, for example, have been encouraging us, for over fifty years, to eat soup for lunch; fifty years hence, they still will be. Coca-Cola has been giving us "good times" ads for nearly a century! Such ads need not use a "hard sell," nor seek instant response. These corporations seek long-term and repeated use of their products, and reasonably expect that they will get a certain percentage of the total market.

The urgency technique is neutral in the sense that it can be used for good or bad purposes, in genuine emergencies or in false ones, effectively or not effectively. But, there are some **predictable situations** in which the "hard sell" is likely to be used to get immediate response, and some in which a "soft sell" is likely to condition the audience for later response.

Common Situations for:

"HARD SELL"	**"SOFT SELL"**
Command, using urgency appeal.	**Conditioning for later.**
When PRODUCT is temporary, limited use or one-time use: FADS, FASHIONS ENTERTAINMENTS, MOVIES, TOYS SEASONAL CLOTHING, EQUIPMENT PERISHABLE FOODS COLLECTIBLES	**When PRODUCT has repeated use:** STANDARD FOODS NON-FASHION CLOTHING MAJOR APPLIANCES
When SELLER is temporary: DOOR-TO-DOOR SELLING TELEPHONE SOLICITATIONS ("boiler room") FLY-BY-NIGHT OPERATIONS ("one shot") CON GAMES ("pigeon drop")	**When SELLER is permanent:** ESTABLISHED STORES
When BUYER is temporary, that is, in a unfamiliar area or condition: TOURISTS, TRAVELERS NEWCOMERS INEXPERIENCED, IMMATURE	**When BUYER is stable and familiar:** RESIDENTS, IN OWN AREA EXPERIENCED, MATURE ADULTS
When a sense of CRISIS exists: (a real or imagined emergency, time limit, or deadline) PAIN, SALES (genuine close-outs) ELECTIONS TV "SHOPPING CLUBS"	**When NO CRISIS, no urgency:** HEALTH BUSINESS AS USUAL
When GUARANTEE (refund, or return of goods) is missing: UNKNOWN COMPANIES "FRONTS"	**When GUARANTEE is explicit, implicit, or available.** ESTABLISHED CORPORATIONS NAME BRANDS
When SUPPLY exceeds DEMAND: SURPLUS situations	**When DEMAND exceeds SUPPLY:** SHORTAGE situations

To recap: Creating a sense of **urgency** is common in **some,** but not all, advertising. Much advertising is a form of **command propaganda** seeking immediate response, but some is a form of **conditioning propaganda** preparing an audience for a future response. Urgency appeals have predictable words and nonverbals. Common situations exist for both the **"hard sell"** and the **"soft sell."**

To analyze an ad, ask these key questions:

Are there any urgency-stressing techniques used?
(Not in all ads, but always check.)

If so, with what **words**? (*e.g. hurry, rush, now, deadline, sale, offer expires*) What **nonverbals**?

If **not**: is this a **"soft-sell"** — part of a repetitive long-term ad campaign for a standard item?

Exercises

1. Local newspapers are likely to advertise sales. Circle the "urgency" words in the various ads for furniture, groceries, and clothing sales.
2. Television ads for cars and trucks are often linked to special sales. Identify the current "urgency" campaigns being used (e.g. seasonal, end-of-model-year).
3. If you have a log or a listing of a number of TV commercials during an hour or a day, estimate what percentage use an "urgency" plea.

Chapter Nine

RESPONSE-SEEKING

Response is the **goal**, the **basic intent** and the **final purpose** of "the pitch." Advertising is meant to sell a product. Attention-getting may be the first important step of the process, but an effective ad, ultimately, must provoke a response.

Perhaps with **soft sell** and **image building** advertising, almost any pleasant, inoffensive ad could be explained or justified as contributing toward some vague or unmeasurable goal. But, most commercial advertising is "command propaganda" designed to sell **specific products**, at a **specific cost-effectiveness**, during a **specific time**.

Ads may be clever, witty, humorous, entertaining, or educational. But, if they don't sell the product, they are not effective. Certainly, we do make artistic judgments and ethical judgments about an ad. But, these aspects are separate and distinct. Many commercials are trite or tasteless, and — unfortunately — very effective. This is one of the realities in our less-than-perfect world. Many ads could be praised for the high quality of the photography or the writing or the acting, but the basic criteria for judging persuasion, *per se*, is pragmatic: **Does it work? Is it effective?**

Making the response **easy, simple**, and **possible** is one of the persuader's most important jobs. Skilled persuaders know that it's not very effective to call for a difficult, complex, or impossible response. Thus, advertisers will seek a **simple response** (such as "Buy"), or the **simple first-step** of a buying sequence: "Call 800 ... Send for ... Shop at ... Come to ...").

The term **"impulse buying"** describes how this principle is applied in "point of purchase" advertising: the displays set up in stores, usually right near the check-out counter where people wait in lines. The products are easily available, convenient to pick up and buy, and usually linked with an **urgency** plea: On Sale, Now!

Removing obstacles to a response includes the removal of any fears which people may have about the quality of the product or the manufacturer. Thus, the confidence-building aspects ("Trust Me") of the ad are very important to making the sale. People are much more likely to buy well known brands.

"**Closing the sale**" is the important part of person-to-person selling. Most people have been involved in business transactions, both as sellers and buyers. But, some people are especially skilled in the art of closing a sale. For example, in selling houses or cars, usually one person (often an office "manager") is the "closer" who is best able to get the customer to say "yes" and sign the contract.

There's a whole range of sales techniques designed to close a sale: making people feel obligated to buy, or embarrassed not to buy; filling out the paperwork for the sale as if consent had already been given; ringing up the cash register; or asking about "extra" information ("Will it be cash or charge?") as if the sale had already been made.

In **person-to-person** selling, if the buyer doesn't respond properly, the persuader can quickly change tactics and use different techniques. But, in advertising to millions of people in the **mass media**, the persuader doesn't have that same kind of instant feedback. So it's much more difficult for advertisers to bring individual buyers to the decision point. Thus, advertisers have developed many clever ways by which their broadcasting to millions can get personal responses.

Mass Media Response

Direct mail advertising (known to its critics as "**junk mail**") developed some of the oldest and most effective response devices, including C.O.D. mail delivery service, pre-paid Business Reply Envelopes, and a variety of ripout cards inserted into magazines.

Coupons are especially popular to get a good response. Billions of "cents off" coupons are distributed every year by mail, newspapers, and magazines. Millions of people are coupon-savers. Coupons are a very effective response device, especially for food products. Not only do people buy the products, but also the sales campaign can be measured by counting the computer-coded coupons redeemed. Commonly, advertisers will use coupons in small, carefully controlled "test markets" to measure their effectiveness. Then, with this **feedback**, they can revise the ad campaign before any expensive national ad campaign.

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RESPONSE	**KEY WORDS**
Act now	
Apply	
Buy	
Call, toll free, 800-	
Call, 900-	
Choose	
Come to	
Drink	
Eat	
Enclose your check	
Enjoy	
Experience	
Fill out and return	
Get	
Go to	
Join	
Make your offer	
Mail this card	
Obtain	
Order	
Pick up your phone	
Purchase	
Register	
Return	
See your local dealer	
Select	
Send today	
Shop at	
Sign here	
Smoke	
Subscribe	
Take a test drive	
Taste	
Use	
Write	

Sweepstakes and **contests** are popular devices which often get good responses from people buying the product or going to the store to pick up an entry blank. Federal anti-lottery laws prohibit sweepstakes which require a purchase. Therefore, to remain legal, sweepstakes must accept the "plain 3x5 card" entry as equal to any entry which encloses the product's boxtop, or accompanies an order. However, many people feel that they have a "better chance" to win if they buy the product. Yes/No tokens, stamps (to paste in boxes), checkmarks (to make) are all attempts by direct mail advertisers to get some kind of active response, to avoid having the ad thrown away as "junk mail" without even being opened. **Attention-getting** is the first major problem which these advertisers face. Thus, when Reader's Digest (or Publisher's Clearing House) makes a major mailing to solicit new subscribers, they may send out 20 million pieces of mail, a very expensive operation. By experience, they know that a million-dollar sweepstakes prize (a relatively minor expense in their whole budget) will increase the number of people who will open their message, read it carefully, and also the number who will actually **respond** and buy.

Telemarketing, 800 & 900 Numbers

The telephone is a great response device, accounting for an estimated $170 billion in all "telemarketing" sales in 1991. Most of this is legal, done in person, by legitimate companies. For example, **800 numbers** are calls paid for by the seller (and included in the "cost of doing business") as a way of getting quick response from potential customers. Some calls go directly to the company; others are handled by "special operators" who relay the information.

Some phone sales are fraudulent, however, perhaps a $1 billion or more, and are becoming more common because of the instant electronic transfer of money now possible. People who are not careful, or not informed, can lose a lot of money quickly, at home on their own telephone. Old-fashioned telephone scams still exist. For example, in a "**boiler room**" operation, a con man will rent a vacant office with dozens of phones, and fill it with temporary employees (who have been promised a bonus for sales) who will use carefully-prepared scripts to make high-pressured sales pitches on the phones. But, new scams are appearing, often using 900 numbers, "interactive" with television.

900 (and 976) numbers are calls charged immediately to the caller's phone bill, an instant sales transaction. Like a credit card, the benefits (if any) are instant — and the reckoning comes later. 900 numbers have been a growth industry. Almost unknown in the mid-80's, by 1991, the FCC estimated that revenues from 900 numbers were over $1 billion. Many of the 900 calls are simply recorded information services (sports scores, stock market quotes, weather) for people willing to pay a modest fee. Other 900 numbers are "chat lines" (recorded "lonely hearts" and "phone sex" fantasy conversations) for which the listening caller is billed by the minute, an expensive entertainment. But, most problems have occured with many of the TV offers which charge exhorbitant fees ($50-$100) for simple lists (Job Search, Credit Card Approval) bilking money from the poor and gullible. Some disclosures about the cost are now required in TV ads, but this "small print" appears briefly. At present, the FCC is considering regulations requiring that callers be told the cost at the beginning of a call, and be given the opportunity to hang up.

To recap: Response is the **goal**, the **basic intent**, the **ultimate purpose** of "the pitch." Persuaders will seek to make response **easy**, and to use **triggering words**, simple directives telling us what to do. Mass media response devices include a variety of reply cards, coupons, contests, 800 & 900 phone calls.

To analyze an ad, ask these key questions:

- Are there any specific **triggering words** used? (*Buy, Get, Call, Drink, Taste*)
- Is there a **specific** response sought? (Most ads: to buy something.)
- If not, is it **conditioning** ("public relations" or "image building") to make us **feel good** about the company, to get favorable public opinion on its side (against any government regulation, taxes)?

Exercises

1. Find an ad which explicitly uses the verb "**buy.**"
2. Find an ad which explicitly uses a verb calling for some action **with** the product, such as: *eat, taste, drink, smoke, ride, fly, enjoy*.
3. Find an ad which calls for the "**first step**" of a buying sequence, such as: *call, visit, stop in, see your local dealer, take a test drive.*
4. Find an ad with an **implied response** for a consumer product. (For example, a "happy times" soft-sell ad for a fast-food restaurant.)
5. Find an ad for a corporation which wants you to "**feel good**" about them. (Check the news for any controversy. Use the NYT Index; investigate more.)

Unwanted Attention

In November, 1990, Volvo got some unwanted attention in the worst deceptive advertising scandal in a generation. An ad agency, preparing a TV commercial in Austin, Texas for national ads for Volvo automobiles, faked a demonstration with a "monster truck" driving over a row of cars and crushing all of them except the Volvo. In fact, what had really happened was, that before the filming of the commercial, a work crew had welded reinforcement bars on the Volvo and had sawed cuts to weaken the other cars. By chance, an alert bystander took pictures of these modifications and turned them over to the Texas Attorney General who filed court papers calling the ad a "hoax and a sham."

This attracted national attention: headlines read "Ad Industry Suffers Crushing Blow." Not since the late 1960s had there been such a grossly deceptive product demonstration. Two famous cases at that time seriously weakened public trust in advertising. Campbell 's Soup was caught faking a TV ad in which marbles had been added into a bowl of soup forcing the vegetables up, giving an illusion of their great quantity. And a Gillette ad demonstration, which claimed their razor was easily shaving "sandpaper," was actually gliding smoothly over Plexiglas.

As a result, public confidence in the truthfulness of advertising claims was seriously weakened. In response, the advertisers started an industry self-regulation system (NARB) designed both to weed out deceptive ads and to ward off potentially stronger regulations from government agencies. Generally speaking, this has been very successful. During the past generation, relatively few deceptive claims have been made by national advertisers. Then, the Volvo ad. *Advertising Age* (11/19/90) editorialized: "The Volvo case, we fear, will lead many consumers to decide that ad claims still can't be trusted, no matter who says this is an isolated departure from modern advertising practice. And we believe it is just that: a shocking, embarrassing, bizarre, clumsy departure from the norms of modern national advertising."

In 1991, Volvo used the slogan: "Volvo — A Car You Can Believe In."

Chapter Ten

OMISSION: WHAT ADS DOWNPLAY

Earlier chapters have focused on how ads **intensify the benefits** they promise by means of repetition, association, and composition. For example, most ads are composed with a 1-2-3-4-5 structural pattern, starting with attention-getting and ending with response-seeking. The following chapter focuses on what kinds of disadvantages are commonly **downplayed**, by means of omission, diversion, and confusion.

In all communication, the basic selection/omission process necessarily omits more than it includes. Whenever we choose to say something, we also choose to omit everything not said.

Most ads are true, but incomplete. They're one-sided, presenting only the favorable aspects, intensifying the "good" about the product.

Advertisers and sellers generally want less "government regulation" telling them what to say; consumer reformers generally want more "disclosure laws" as counter-measures to certain omissions. Borderline problems and controversies are common here. Problems occur, especially when ads omit *relevant* information which may harm the consumer.

We can prepare ourselves to become more aware of **what** "bad" might be downplayed, and **how** it might be done.

Expect ads to downplay the "bad" — to omit, conceal, disguise, minimize, divert attention away from —any **economic disadvantages, health and safety problems**, and **competitors' benefits.**

Economic disadvantages

Cost is the most common omission in ads. Most ads don't even state the selling price of the product. Both the **selling price** and the **overall cost** (which includes maintenance and operating costs, accessories and extras) are often downplayed by words ("only dollars a week... just pennies a day") or by omission.

Counter-measures by consumer reformers, in the form of some disclosure laws, now require ads to reveal some omissions relating to energy-cost ("batteries not included") and energy-efficiency (miles-per-gallon ratings for cars).

Credit-card buying **obscures** the actual cost by emphasizing convenience and low monthly payments, and downplaying the total cost, including the very high interest rates on this kind of loan. Before consumer reforms, such financial information was totally concealed. "Truth-in-Lending" laws now require that the Annual Percentage Rate (APR) of the interest charges be clearly stated in the written contracts, yet many consumers don't pay attention to the "small print" in ads or contracts.

Good price, bad value. Less obvious, but still an economic disadvantage, is the situation in which the price may be cheap, but the value may be poor because of inferior materials, poor design, or limited usefulness. Many gadgets and gift items, novelties and fads, are one-use products, destined to gather dust in a closet. ("**Cost-per-use**" may be a good concept for estimating value for some of these items.)

Most **hard-core fraud** in deceptive advertising cases involves a money loss (rather than health and safety issues), some kind of scam designed to get money from buyers under false pretenses, by omitting important information. In the past, most "fraudulent misrepresentation" crimes have occured in mail-order fraud, by fly-by-night operators, who "take the money and run." But now the potential for fraud and deceptive advertising is increasingly possible as cable TV and instant transfer of money (using credit cards and 900 numbers) become more common. The so-called "**infomercials**" are already on the borderline (or, over it, as some critics claim) of fraudulent misrepresentation.

Borderline fraud cases are certainly common in TV ads, using 900 telephone numbers, which sell information about job opportunities, government benefits, loans, and credit card applications. Such information (lists, how-to-do-it books) sold could also be obtained free from the library or government agencies. Some disclaimers do appear in wording of the "small print" in some ads. But, the target audience for such ads are people who are gullible or unsophisticated. Critics disagree about the kind and degree of government regulation needed in these situations.

"Infomercials"

Infomercials is the new term currently being used to describe program length commercials (5 - 30 minutes) designed to give the **appearance** of an investigative news program, or a talk show, or an interview program, or a documentary, or a "neutral" panel of "outside" experts. Infomercials are often hosted by a celebrity, with a live audience, using "program credits" and other borrowed devices to create the illusion that they are not ads, but are presenting unbiased "information." The content of infomercials varies widely; the products range from self-help courses (diets, stop-smoking, self-esteem) to rock-and-roll videos, to kitchen gadgets, to get-rich-quick schemes.

Such programs had been banned from TV by the consumerist reforms in the 1960's, but returned after 1984 when the industry was deregulated by the Reagan administration. Within a few years, there were over 2,000 such infomercials running on independent and cable stations. This quickly growing industry ($750 million in 1990) is expected to gross $2 to $5 billion within the next few years. Expect to see more infomercials in the future. Buyer beware!

Specific frauds have already been dealt with on a case-by-case basis as the FTC has ordered several deceptive infomercials off the air: for example, a diet product hosted by President Reagan's son, a baldness product hosted by Robert Vaughn, and an impotence "cure" hosted by Lyle Waggoner. However, at present (1991), there are no laws restricting infomercials and very weak FTC "guidelines" which only require brief disclaimers at the beginning and end of the program.

Those who produce infomercials claim that these programs are valid and entertaining ways to give viewers a complete explanation or demonstration of products. "We believe the viewer is sophisticated enough to pick up the fact that this is a commercial," testified one such producer.

Critics, however, charge that not only do some infomercials sell bogus products, but that most are inherently deceptive because they try to fool the audience, to give the illusion that they are not commercials. Critics point out that many viewers, switching TV channels, join a program midway and do not see the disclaimers. Many other viewers do not understand this new technique, or erroneously believe that they are "protected" by the government from such deception. Reformers want an easy to understand disclosure statement — such as "PAID ADVERTISEMENT" — to appear on-screen during the whole program.

Currently, infomercials are on the fringe and are not being produced by the mainstream advertisers. Testifying at a 1990 Congressional hearing, Harold Shoup, Vice President of the American Association of Advertising Agencies, said infomercials were a "violation of our standards both in terms of the claims that are made as well as the format that masks the commercial purpose of the program itself."

Expect persuaders to downplay, conceal, or omit any economic disadvantages to the buyer. Such omissions, legal or illegal, relate to pocketbook issues, involving money. Yet, other relevant omissions are possible.

Health and Safety Problems

Ads sometimes downplay health and safety dangers related to the product. Because **some** consumer protection laws exist, we tend to think that we are protected from **all** hazards. However, in many cases, only when they are forced to disclose — by government regulations — do companies give consumers any warnings about any potential dangers of their products.

While the oldest consumer protection laws (such as the Pure Food and Drug Act, 1906 — prompted by Upton Sinclair's novel, *The Jungle*) focused on basic sanitation, many later health and safety laws regulated how products were labeled and advertised. For example, the most important recent legislation has been the 1990 Food Labeling Act (in effect by 1992), a major revision designed to clarify confusing terms ("natural," "light") and to disclose ingredient information (fat, salt, cholesterol content).

Disclosure laws

Disclosure law is used here in the broadest sense of any government regulation which requires sellers to provide **accurate** and **adequate** information to buyers: including ingredient labels, hazard and safety warnings, standardization laws (weights and measures; unit pricing), and all of the various required disclaimers and disclosures — the "small print" in ads.

Conservatives generally oppose government regulations (or an "excessive degree" of them) arguing that buyers and sellers should have the free choice and responsibility to buy and sell whatever they want. Unnecessary regulations, they argue, burden the seller with "red tape" and ultimately increase the cost to the consumer. Because manufacturers know that any warning will frighten away some buyers, most sellers will argue against disclosures in any borderline cases, or in cases in which the harm is not immediate or direct. Consumer critics charge that our existing labels are still very minimal — the *least* possible warning — because of the political power of industry and agricultural groups.

Liberals generally favor government regulations, arguing that individual consumers need the government to act as their agent to counterbalance the power of large corporations. Liberals argue that the omission of relevant information (e.g. harmful consequences) influences the decision-making process. Free choice must be informed choice: buyers must have both truthful and adequate knowledge of both the good and bad. In simple transactions (such as buying vegetables) in which flaws are obvious, buyers do not need much protection; but, in complex transactions (most manufactured goods), buyers need some warnings about hidden hazards involving the ingredients, design, or use.

Health and safety hazards still exist in the marketplace because there is no overall coherent plan to deal with all the possible problems. Existing warnings and disclosures are a patchwork quilt of regulations from federal agencies (FDA, FTC, USDA) and 50 different state policies, and voluntary guidelines from industry groups (BBB, NARB), consumer groups (Consumers Union), and medical associations (AMA).

Cigarette advertising is the most obvious example of the omission of harmful effects. For years, the cigarette companies publicly denied any health problem. In fact, in the 1940's, ads even claimed that cigarettes were healthy ("Good for Your T-Zone") and did not cause lung and throat problems ("Not a cough in a carload"). But, after years of medical evidence and long battles by consumerists (see Thomas Whiteside, *Selling Death: Cigarette Advertising and Public Health*), cigarette advertising was eventually taken off radio and TV, but, in a compromise, remained in newspapers, magazines, and on billboards. To evade these limits, some companies sponsored tennis tourneys, race cars, background billboards and other indirect ways of getting television exposure. Regulators wanted stronger warning labels ("DANGER" — with skull and crossbones), but had to compromise with four, milder "rotating" warnings.

With the overwhelming medical evidence now about the deadly dangers of cigarette smoking, it is likely that the 1990's will see a total ban on cigarette advertising in this country. Many critics believe that the current strategy by Phillip Morris (the #1 US advertiser in 1990: $2+ billion) is a cynical last-ditch effort to prolong the fight. Phillip Morris is currently sponsoring a "Smokers Rights" campaign — as well as sponsoring a national celebration of the "Bill of Rights" -- a controversial use of the "association" technique. In a move to defuse criticism, Phillip Morris is also funding an "educational" campaign advising young people that smoking is an *adult* activity, *not for kids.*

Unsafe products have always existed. Sometimes there was a **design** flaw, such as the classic example of the Chevy Corvair, as recounted in Ralph Nader's *Unsafe at Any Speed.* Sometimes the problem was in the **material,** as in the case of asbestos hairdryers or of flammable childrens' pajamas. In some cases, there were inherent risks in the **uses** of certain tools and machines, such as lawnmowers, chainsaws, and other power tools. In some cases, as in unsafe toys, the **user** was especially vulnerable. In the past, many sellers have not warned about safety hazards unless they were forced by law. Even at present, there are still many controversial borderline cases. For example, ads emphasize the fun of motorcycles, snowmobiles, and other off-road vehicles, but downplay the degree of danger and the number of accidents. Does the illusion of carefree enjoyment in this kind of ad create a false sense of security?

"Everything causes cancer!"
Sometimes people dismiss warnings ("Pretty soon they're going to say that *everything* causes cancer!"), ignoring the reality of the "chemical revolution" in agriculture, since the 1950's, when agricultural pesticides and over 5,000 chemical food additives were introduced. Many of these chemicals, even some of those generally regarded as safe, were not tested for their long-term, cumulative effects.

Competitors' Benefits

Ads downplay the benefits of the competition, of rival products, or of our other choices, the other things competing for our limited time and money.

Ads downplay the "bad," which, in this context, means "bad" *in relation to the persuader:* anything which would "hurt the sale" — the persuasion transaction. Thus, the benefits offered by competitors or rivals, or any other choices might not be "bad" for the buyer, but may be "bad" for the seller.

Ads are **not** obligated to point out these "other sides to the story," the other choices we have. Any single ad or individual product can defend or justify itself as being simply one — of the many - - choices in the marketplace in competition for the millions of consumers and their various needs, wants, and preferences.

In theory, most people agree that, in a free market, it is the responsibility of the buyers to have **"common sense"** to be prudent in spending their money, setting their priorities, and making their choices. In practice, many buyers are deeply in debt due to their own overspending, the availability of easy credit, and the constant lure of advertising.

As receivers, we have to assume that ads will be limited, one-sided, and self-serving, omitting the benefits of our other options and choices. Such awareness is our best protection so that we more consciously seek to counter-balance these omissions.

"Common sense" counter-measures

Know the product. Comparison shopping is one way to protect yourself. Most people window-shop in stores, malls, and catalogs to get a sense of comparative price and value. But, the more expensive the purchase, the more systematic "research time" and comparison shopping is necessary. If you make a poor choice of an inexpensive product, you can easily "write it off to experience" and not buy that product again. But, a poor choice of a major item — such as a car — may cost you money for years to come. Public Libraries everywhere have *Consumer Reports* and other objective buying guides available. Before you make any major purchase, ask your librarian for help in researching it.

Know thyself! Knowing yourself is often more important than knowing the product. Know your own needs and wants, your own values and priorities, your own limits. (Write lists. Specify.) What benefits get high priority in an ad's claims and promises? Are these your priorities? What are your other choices, your other options ? (***Do something else, buy something else, use less, use less often, rent, borrow, share, do without?***) Know your own financial limits. Spend your own money. Very few people make errors when they pay cash with earned money. Most problems occur when "other peoples' money" is spent, or when things are bought on credit — which obscures the real cost. **Self-deception** in a sales transaction may be more common than deceptive advertising. We tell ourselves that we can "afford" it. We screen out the things we don't want to hear — the voices of caution from parents or others — and listen only to the glowing promises of the persuaders.

In brief: Expect ads to downplay any disadvantages of the product. In response, give special attention to cost, to health and safety issues, and to your other choices available.

Omission is the *most common* way that persuaders downplay the "bad" about a product. But, other ways to downplay any disadvantages or problems include the *degree* of attention (giving something less space, less time, smaller print), the *placement* (obscure location, far background), and various *language techniques* (such as euphemisms, circumlocution, and jargon) in which words can be deliberately vague, indirect, or confusing. Some of the many possible ways to downplay are suggested and summarized briefly in the few paragraphs of the ***Intensify/Downplay Schema*** (p. 21) and "***Questions You Can Ask About Any Ad***" (p.19). The next few pages discuss the problem of "visibility" and suggest some ways how to find out what has been omitted.

Visibility

Nobody, in their right mind, intentionally seeks the "bad." But, many of the pleasurable benefits we seek also have **side-effects** which are harmful. If all harmful effects were **immediate, direct, and visible,** there would be very few problems. People would simply avoid the "bad." But, many harmful effects are **delayed, indirect, and invisible** — with a "time bomb" effect.

Civil laws are usually created in response to immediate, direct, and visible harms: when the bad effects are easily seen and their specific causes are easily recognized. For example, now that we know that asbestos, lead-based paint, and DDT are very hazardous poisons, the U.S. has laws prohibiting their use. Yet, even these are very recent laws because, a generation ago, the harmful effects of these things were not known and obvious. They all involved a delayed, cumulative, long-term effect.

Today, in current controversies about cigarette ads and "junk food" ads, many misunderstandings are caused by people who limit the concept of "harm" to only those harms which are immediate, direct, and visible.

"What's wrong with that ad?" someone might say, pointing to a "harmless" ad for a candy bar or a fast-food restaurant. Nothing may be wrong with one ad, or one candy bar, or one greasy hamburger. But, the long-term, cumulative effect of millions of ads (and billions of candy bars and greasy hamburgers) has contributed to a national nutrition crisis: millions of people are overweight and unhealthy because of their junk food diet. Alas, many of the things which give us "instant gratification" also give us "delayed pain."

Harmful effects can be immediate or delayed, direct or indirect, and visible or invisible.

Relevant Omissions: Harmful Effects & Concealed Causes

Omission is very hard to detect because, literally, there's nothing there: how do you know what harmful effects have been withheld, concealed, or hidden?

To avoid harmful **effects**, we often have to pay attention to their **causes**. Our decisions are frequently based on our discovering a cause-and-effect relationship. For example, if we see a restaurant with a filthy kitchen, decaying food, and coughing cooks (probable causes of a potential harm to us), we need not wait for "proof positive." Reasonable people can infer that these things will cause bad effects.

Causes are usually very complex to analyze, but, as a useful starting point, we can apply a traditional sorting pattern: Aristotle's basic four part division of **efficient, material, formal,** and **final** causes. (In addition to these four causes — who, what, how, why — philosophers also note the two "conditions" which relate to time and place — when and where.)

Aristotle used the folksy example of the shoemaker and the shoes to identify the *efficient cause* as the do-er of the action, the person involved, the shoemaker. The *material cause*, in this case, would be the materials involved, the leather and nails and so on. The *formal cause* would be the design or blueprint or plan to give it form. The *final cause* would be any factor related to the purpose or the intent, whether to protect the feet, or beautify the feet, or pay the shoemaker's rent, or make a profit.

If we assume that advertisers will downplay the "bad," this basic sorting pattern provides a way of systematic analysis to help us look for relevant omissions -- about potentially harmful effects and their concealed causes.

Ads can omit unfavorable information about the **efficient cause** (the "maker," the manufacturer, the workers, the sellers, the distributors, the people involved) including such things as: bad reputation, financial instability or insolvency, mismanagement; incompetent or inexperienced workers; unsanitary workers; unbonded repairers; unaccredited schools; a fly-by-night company or boiler-room operation, and so on.

Ads can omit unfavorable information about the **material cause**. Materials can be unsafe or unhealthy, poisonous, contaminated, flammable, fragile, breakable, sharp-edged, and so on. Economic loss or harm can result from materials which are inferior, substitute, shoddy, sub-standard, imitation, adulterated, or any aspect which results in less quality or less quantity.

Ads can omit unfavorable information about the **formal cause**, the design. Errors, mistakes, flaws, and weaknesses in the planning or design can be concealed or minimized. Sometimes a design can create an unsafe, life-threatening situation. More commonly, many poorly designed products are simply inconvenient, uncomfortable, unwieldy, or difficult to use. Planning and organizing errors in providing services (such as home repairs, auto repairs) are common. Large organizations can have complex or complicated procedures resulting in the "red tape" or the "run around," interruptions and delays.

Ads can omit unfavorable information about the **final cause**, the intended use or purpose. With some products, there is an inherent risk or danger in the use: for example, a chainsaw, or any tool with a blade, heat, flame, or electricity. In addition to safety hazards and misuse, some items have other inherent problems in use: energy-wasting, time-wasting, inefficient, very costly to operate, incompatible with other systems, limited usefulness, skilled operators needed, and so on. Some products (such as snowmobiles and off-road ATVs), when used, may benefit the individual, but harm society or the environment.

What disadvantages, drawbacks, or hazards have been omitted from the ad? Any unwanted, harmful side-effects: unsafe, unhealthy, uneconomical, inefficient, unneeded? Are there any concealed problems concerning the manufacturer? The materials used? The design? Is the purpose or use of the product harmful — to the user, to others?

In brief: Most ads are true, but incomplete. Ads downplay the "bad" usually **economic disadvantages**, **health and safety problems**, and **competitors' benefits** — by means of omission, diversion, and confusion. Disclosure laws, requiring information to be revealed, are meant to counteract any relevant omissions by forcing persuaders to provide **truthful** and **adequate** information for consumers to make informed choices. Omissions can be non-relevant or **relevant** to harmful effects. Omissions are very hard to find or analyze, because nothing is there. However, one way to detect relevant omissions is to be aware of the various causes — **material, efficient, formal, final** — related to harmful effects.

Exercises

1. Look for the "**small print,**" the required disclosures in many ads. Identify the concern addressed: i.e. is it an **economic** disclosure (such as cost, interest rate, energy cost, extras needed) or a **health and safety** disclosure (a warning, a cautionary)?
2. Consider your own recent purchases (or your future plans). What are some of your options or choices? How do you apply the advice "**know the product**" and "**know thyself**" to your own situation?
3. Research a current controversy about "**deceptive advertising.**" In terms of claims and omissions, what are the specific issues involved?

Chapter 11

THE HIDDEN HARMS OF ADVERTISING

Advertising has many different kinds of critics: some focus on hard-core fraud and deceptive advertising; others focus on product safety issues; others concentrate on consumer savings ("best buys"). Still others — some more interested in saving souls than saving dollars — are concerned with the more subtle "hidden harms" of advertising which may not be measurable, but are still real.

Many such critics exist, but you are not likely to see them on television, which is, after all, the prime beneficiary of advertising. Any "Special" the television networks do about advertising will concentrate on the show biz aspects of it, or on chatty anecdotes, behind-the-scenes, about how-it's-done. Any criticism will be brief and bland, often about the most obvious harms.

No one claims that such hidden harms are caused directly by any one specific ad. Most critics see them as the result of the cumulative effects of a blitz of billions of ads. Both secular and religious observers have criticized the harmful effects of advertising in relation to **materialism, personal economic and psychological problems, family stress, social justice**, and **environmental destruction.**

Materialism

As Madonna (tongue in cheek?) reminds us, we are living in a material world. Certainly there's been enough said about the "Me Generation" and the change in American culture during the past generation to indicate that many people see a significant increase in greed and avarice, in a self centered materialism, in our society.

Materialism is not new in this country. For many explorers, pioneers, and immigrants, the "American Dream" was an economic one, a materialistic one. However, America has also had a co-existing — and contradictory idealistic "American Dream," an anti-materialistic tradition, both religious and secular, as seen in both the Puritan preachers and the New England writers.

Yet, today's materialism differs from that of an earlier era. For example, Ben Franklin's materialistic maxims about the virtues of hard work, savings, and thrift ("a penny saved is a penny earned") have been replaced today by advertisers encouraging consumption and instant gratification, and by banks promoting credit cards as "easy money."

Religious critics emphasize that our religious values are being undermined and eroded by a commercialism which distracts people away from spiritual matters. Although some TV preachers seem pretty cozy with ads, dollars, and creature comforts, most mainstream religious commentators are distressed with modern advertising practices. By focusing on the temporal rather than the eternal, the Here instead of the Hereafter, such materialism -- religious critics of advertising argue — causes us to neglect our own soul 's salvation and the due respect, reverence, and worship of God. Whereas religious critics fault advertising for neglecting the life of the spirit, secular critics often complain that such commercialism neglects the life of the mind.

Secular critics emphasize that a consumer culture trivializes human potential and the genuine achievements of civilization possible in art and literature, in science and scholarship. ("What a piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties...") Advertising, they claim, reduces human experience from an exhirating adventure into a shopping spree at the mall. Advertising defines "the good life" in terms of buying rather than of doing, of acquisition rather than of accomplishment, of consumption rather than conservation.

For example, Ronald Collins and Michael Jacobson, spokesmen for the Center for the Study of Commercialism, claim: "The imperative to consume is rapidly becoming the supreme ethic in our culture. It is fueled by the ceaseless marketing and promotion of ever more numerous products. The craving for more profoundly affects our political, economic, and religious institutions in ways that run counter to certain core values, such as self-restraint, communal participation, and respect for the environment...Put simply: Omnipresent commercialism is wrecking America. Our cultural resources are dwindling. Value alternatives beyond those of the marketplace are disappearing. The very idea of *citizen* has become synonymous with *consumer*.... [consumers] are the ones who destroy or expend by use, the ones who devour all. Is this to be the model for world citizenship?"

Most people, if questioned, might agree — upon reflection — that ads are "units of persuasion." But, we really don't think of them that way, or take them seriously. For most people, ads are simply trivial annoyances, endurable as harmless trade-offs to get other benefits. Most Americans have welcomed commercial television as a free babysitter (but would be angry if their young children were approached in the streets by a stranger selling something) and many welcome Channel One into the schoolrooms because there's "nothing wrong" with its daily dose of "harmless ads." In brief, ads are accepted as uncritically in this century as earlier centuries accepted mosquitoes and flies as nothing more than pesty nuisances.

Economic Problems

Debt Cycle. By stimulating many desires and urging instant gratification, constant advertising has had the cumulative effect of ensnaring many people into an endless debt cycle. In the past, most people couldn't overspend or exceed their limits because credit was so hard to get. Now, not only has advertising increased our desires, but also banks and credit card companies (owned by banks) have "expanded" our limits by offering "easy credit" and time-payments — usually at a very high rate of interest.

Many people have gotten into the habit of using a credit card and paying only the "minimum due" monthly payments, thus paying a huge "hidden tax" in interest (often 20% or more). Many will never get out of their debt cycle, often making a joke of it, that they're "maxing out" on their credit cards. Or, they try to "solve the problem" by playing the state lottery. But, it's really no joke because such debt has been the source of untold family crises and conflicts.

Child Labor. The old image of "child labor" calls to mind images of "sooty waifs" working in the mines, or tattered grapes-of-wrathy migrant kids, deprived of school and playtime, so that their families wouldn't starve. While such conditions may still exist for a few, most American teen-agers employed in after-school or part-time jobs are earning money not for family survival basics, but for their own personal spending money — "disposable income" — for highly-advertised consumer goods and entertainments.

Most kids get a job not to pay the rent (or utility bills, or insurance or medical), but to buy CDs and videos, to go to movies and concerts, to get more clothes and fashions, or to make car payments — all of the luxuries of an affluent society which advertising has led us to assume and to expect as "necessities."

Many young people are "spending their youth" on the wrong things. A part-time job may take up hours better spent in develeloping both intellectual and physical skills. Most kids need time for "basics" (required homework) and teachers have complained that their students are often tired in class because of their overloaded work schedules. (Parents, teachers, and schools boards need to show other choices and provide other activities and places such as basketball courts, swimming pools, libraries, arts and crafts.)

Psychological Problems

Other critics of the hidden harms of advertising have focused on the psychological problems of the individual. Earlier, it was noted that many ads use the association technique to link their products with many desirable "intangible" benefits, such as feelings of success, love, and belonging. Growing up in a world with persuaders manipulating our hopes and fears certainly creates psychological problems: conflicts, frustrations, fears, and dissatisfactions.

Although our desires may be unlimited, our money, our time, and our abilities are not. Many ads stress positional goals (1st, Best) with limited "Winners." Many ads stress vicarious, "second-hand" experiences, encouraging viewers to be passive receivers of entertainments. Many ads encourage illusions and totally unrealistic expectations.

In one sense, these are problems hurting the individual; in another sense, they relate to other social problems affecting the whole society. Millions of poor people, for example, who cannot afford many items, are being exposed daily to the same television ads, as a "spillover" audience, to the same intense persuasion targeted at a richer audience. Street crime, for example, is often related to youths who rob or steal to get money to buy the latest fads, fashions (sneakers, clothes), or entertainments. Very few crimes today involve stealing a loaf of bread for basic survival.

Family Stress

Bluntly speaking, money problems cause a lot of divorce and domestic violence. And a lot of money problems are related to our increasing wants — stimulated by advertising — and our limited means.

Ads are planned to be "on your side": they flatter you ("you deserve it... you can afford it") and send the messages you want to hear ("get it now"). In relation to the thousands of upbeat "positive" messages from ads, the smiling faces and friendly voices offering goodies, parents are often the only "negatives" around, and have to function in the role of the heavies, the kill-joys, the nay-sayers: ("You can't have it.... we can't afford it... you have to wait..."

Family dramas are often made up of the intricate dialogue between the parents as providers, unable to provide enough ("What do you think, that I'm made out of money? Money doesn t grow on trees!") and the rising expectations and increasing dissatisfactions (fueled by ads, directly, or indirectly by peer pressure) of the children: the asking, begging, pleading, pestering, wheedling, whining, pouting; followed by the rejecting, refusing, counter-suggesting ("Why don't you wear your..."); and the subsequent defending, explaining, parrying ("it's only..."), and so on.

Furthermore, some recent economic changes have caused new kinds of "fairness" conflicts between parents and children over family money matters because of unequal economic pressures. **Unadvertised "necessities"** are getting much more expensive at the same time that many **highly-advertised "luxuries"** are getting relatively cheaper.

Housing costs, for example, which were relatively affordable a few years ago, have skyrocketed. Homeless people on the streets are only the tip of the less visible, but increasing, new social problems of millions of multi-family households living together in cramped quarters, and millions of two-income families needing both parents working simply to provide for basic necessities.

Parents — the adult providers of the non-advertised "necessities" (such as housing, utilities, taxes, medical, transportation costs) — often get caught between these rigid demands from the outside and the increasing demands from inside the family for some highly-advertised "luxuries." Technology can create (and advertising can help distribute) some products relatively cheaply: clothes, cosmetics, movies, concerts, CDs, toys, games, electronics, and so on.

Adult providers are often unable to provide everything, because they have limits, fixed incomes, unless they take extra jobs, or borrow money (credit cards) and go deeper into a debt cycle. At the same time that the parents are stressed to pay for the basics, many teen agers have more "discretionary spending money" than their parents. In 1991, there was over $80 billion of such discretionary spending by American teen-agers!

Some commentators say that many kids grow up "prematurely affluent"-having a lot of such "discretionary spending money" available to them during childhood and adolesence. Later, after finishing school, as young adults, they become "downwardly mobile" because they are unable to support themselves at the same level. Unable to afford housing, they won't "leave the nest" of their parents' home, or, they may leave temporarily, then return ("boomerangs") as adult dependents who want both an "independent lifestyle" (car, friends) while still depending on the parents for shelter and basics. Parents expect to take care of their children and want them to have benefits. But, the intensity of advertising may be causing new problems of **degree**: how much is enough? How long?

Some say it can be a vicious cycle: parents using TV as a free "babysitter," thus exposing young children to such commercial stimulation of desires; then the kids (unaware of limits and realities) becoming in-house sales agents for the advertisers; then the parents, working harder to provide, and feeling guilty about leaving the home or spending too much time working, "buying off" the kids with toys and allowances, and the kids exploiting the parents, and so on. Such situations are some of the indirect, cumulative hidden harms of ads.

Even *Advertising Age* has recognized the growing imbalance and has editorialized for advertisers to be responsible and "soften their hedonistic appeals, especially to younger audiences." *Ad Age* (4/2/90) said: "Until recent decades, our appeals to 'get it today' were routinely countered by an . 'Old World' society in which the Puritan ethic, in many manifestations, was still at work. Mothers, fathers, grandparents tried to teach their children about patience and prudence, the golden rule and the rewards for hard work. But the world has changed. For many reasons, all too many mothers and fathers aren't teaching those lessons, or watching their kids closely enough. Schools? Government?

forbidden to teach morality. Family life and values are crumbling. What used to be a somewhat even battle between the exaggerations and lure of advertising and the prudence of authority figures at home has become dangerously one-sided."

Social Justice

Social justice may be the basic global issue: the worldwide problem of "fairness," of trying to equalize the gap between Haves and Have-Nots, rich and poor. Is it fair that a relatively small group of fortunate Haves (primarily in America, Europe, and Japan) live in such abundance and affluence while most people on earth, the Have-Nots, live in poverty? In America, we seldom see ourselves as "Haves" because ads keep stressing items we *don't* have; often, in comparison with others close around us, we may even feel "deprived."

Such basic economic issues relating to equitable distribution of resources and benefits, to affluence and poverty, to abundance and scarcity, will continue as the underlying conflicts in the future. Thus far, neither capitalist nor socialist systems have solved these problems. After the 1989 collapse of the Eastern European socialist systems, one commentator noted that while Western economists focused too much attention on production, ignoring the problems of fair distribution of goods — the Soviet economists spent too much attention focused on fair distribution, ignoring the problems of the production of enough goods.

Change is inevitable. What kind of change may be within our control, but principles and priorities must preceed policies and programs. Religious and moral leaders have often sought to make us more aware of these issues of social justice. Pope John Paul II, for example, in 1984, made a forceful plea: "The needs of the poor must take priority over the desires of the rich, the rights of the workers over the maximization of profits, the preservation of the environment over uncontrolled industrial expansion, production to meet social needs over production for military purposes."

Worldwide television became a reality in the 1980's. Billions of people on earth — in Cairo and Calcutta, Seoul and Shanghai, wherever — now see glimpses of an affluent "American life style" in the background details of our movies, TV sitcoms, and CNN news. This is changing the aspirations of the whole world. Most people on earth, legitimately, want the same kind of material goods we have. In comparison to our wants, the desires of these people — standing in bread lines or in empty stores — are very modest.

The seemingly "simple answer" would be a goal to provide everyone on earth — all the Have-Nots — with the same benefits as the Haves. But,if the earth has waste and pollution problems now, caused by the few Haves, what would it be like when the many Have Nots start to consume and to waste in the same way? It doesn't seem appropriate for us, the rich, to tell the poor, to restrict their desires. But,it is appropriate to tell ourselves.

Environment. Ads encourage consumption, waste, and a throw-away mentality contributing to the destruction of the earth and its resources. Conservationists encourage us to counter-balance: to moderate, consume less, conserve, and re-cycle. Recognize that there's a lot of lip service by advertisers, diversionary tactics which blur the issue. Polluters, for example, will hire ad agencies and PR companies to create ads which give the impression that they are doing a good job in environmental issues. "Green Marketing" (of "safe" products) has become a very fashionable buzzword in advertising, so much so that almost every piece of throwaway plastic makes the claim that it is "biodegradable." Consumers, too, can give lip-service: "I'm against pollution... as long as I can have MY throw-away products, MY soda-pop in cans, MY convenience food, MY disposable diapers."

Voluntary Moderation

Assume that this advertising blitz will continue. In your lifetime, ads will not be *less* sophisticated, nor *less* intense. Technology will continue to produce new consumer products. In one sense, this is a great democratization of pleasure: music and movies, which a king could not have commanded a century ago, can now be enjoyed by the average person. We can't ignore or deny these benefits. But, we don't have to tolerate the harms.

Ads will continue with their "want" and "more" messages. Changes are not likely to take place "out there." But, if you want, you can change your own life, your values, your choices, your attitudes, your behaviors.

You can make a choice to **want less,** simply because you know that it will ease the pressure on yourself, your family, and the earth. Such voluntary moderation need not cause pain and suffering. Perhaps a little inconvenience, but you can compensate: instead of wanting more things, you can seek to develop more abilities, more skills. Do—ing instead of buy—ing.

Listen to some of the quieter voices of your parents and teachers, of those people who encourage you, not to buy and consume, but to learn and to do. They may not have as glitzy a presentation as the advertisers, but they may be more beneficial.

If you want to start living more simply, it's really simple.

"Simplify. Simplify. Simplify." — Henry David Thoreau

The **Orwell Award** for "distinguished contribution in honesty and clarity in public language" has twice been presented to consumer advocates reporting about the growth of commercial advertising within the schools. In 1979, Sheila Harty's **Hucksters in the Classroom** detailed the growth of in-school promotions ranging from scoreboard ads in the gym and pop machines in the halls to corporate-sponsored educational films in the classrooms. In 1990, the Consumers Union report, **Selling America's Kids**, made an even more extensive survey, including not only in-school promotions, but also ads on TV, celebrity endorsements, kids' clubs, product placements in movies, advertorials in childrens' magazines, licensing and cross-selling (tie-ins of movies and TV characters with toys, game, clothes, foods). Of special interest to parents, teachers, and school boards, this report concluded with three major recommendations:

1. **Make schools ad-free zones**, where young people can pursue learning free of commercial influences and pressures.

2. Promotions that target kids must meet **higher standards** than those aimed at adults. They should not exploit the inexperience and vulnerabilities of kids; and they should clearly identify themselves as advertising.

3. **Educate children about the nature of commercial messages** directed at them and build their ability to resist sales pressures. Schools and parents need to balance some of the promotional influences on kids' development as consumers and citizens.

Selling America's Kids: Commercial Pressures on Kids of the 90's

Prepared for *Zillions: Consumer Reports for Kids* (1990)

Published by Consumers Union Educational Services (Mt. Vernon, NY 10553)

Political Language Patterns

The next chapter reprints a set of brief guides useful to analyze some predictable patterns in political rhetoric. Originally, each section appeared as a separate one-page "freebie" in an 8xll format designed to be photocopied. These were distributed free to teachers in order to provide them with brief teaching aids which they could incorporate within existing courses.

In order to include as much useful information as possible on one page, certain trade-offs had to be made: the style is terse, severe, often lacking the modifiers, qualifiers, and examples found within normal prose style. Many of these paragraphs are information-rich, tightly written, densely crammed with ideas, meant to be "unpacked" by teachers who would add current examples, or explain unfamiliar words.

Chapter 12

POLITICAL LANGUAGE PATTERNS

The most common kind of persuasive message that we see in our society is commercial advertising, selling consumer products and services. The easiest way to start analyzing any kind of persuasion is to focus first on analyzing ads. But, ultimately, we have to analyze the more important issues involving social, religious, and political persuasion.

Advertising is fairly easy to analyze. Ads are usually found in carefully crafted packages (30-second spots, full-page ads) with coherent messages, and involving very simple transactions: "buy this." Political persuasion, in contrast, is much harder to analyze because it's often **fragmented, intrinsically complex,** and **emotionally upsetting**.

We usually see only bits and fragments of political messages: often in headlines or on the TV news (edited by others), or in informal discussions at home or at work. Such discussions are usually random and chaotic, often generating more heat than light. We seldom listen to a whole political speech or read a whole book or even an essay of political argument or exposition. Even during the conventions and election year, TV coverage will not stay fixed on one coherent sequence, but instead offers a montage, a kaleidoscopic picture of "highlights" (edited, chosen by others). Furthermore, the media, functioning as "gatekeepers" have a great impact on both the kind and the degree of political messages we see and hear: on **what** we see, and on **how much** attention is given to various concerns.

Political persuasion is intrinsically more complex, more complicated, more abstract, and, often, more remote than persuasion limited to **individual** benefits. Politics is concerned with **social** benefits, with the common good: a difficult task in even the smallest of groups, a very complicated one in a nation of millions.

Usually, we're more emotionally involved in political, social, and religious issues than we are in the simple sales transactions in most commercial ads. Although ads for products may appeal strongly to some of our emotional needs, political and social persuasion often involves our basic beliefs, our fundamental world views, and our own roles.

QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK ABOUT POLITICAL LANGUAGE

Citizens in a democracy need to be better informed, not only about the **content** (the specific issues) but also about the **form** (the predictable patterns). This list systematically suggests many ways to analyze political language (including nonverbals, omissions and related actions). From these, observers can select a focus appropriate to their intent and to the situation.

EXPECT PEOPLE TO INTENSIFY THEIR OWN "GOOD" (AND, IN AGGRESSION, TO INTENSIFY OTHERS' "BAD") BY MEANS OF REPETITION, ASSOCIATION, AND COMPOSITION.

REPETITION is the simplest, most common way of intensifying any message, including political rhetoric. <> What key words are often repeated? What themes or ideas? What images, pictures, or symbols? What names? What slogans are used? Any internal repetition techniques (e.g. rhyme, alliteration, anaphora) within the phrasing? What cliches, and stock responses, can be expected in various situations? What repeated activities (e.g. rituals, customs, traditions) are used or known within the group? <> What **frequency** is the repetition: how often do you see or hear it? What **duration:** how long has it gone on? What **intensity**: how many, how much? A blitz, a saturation? <> What effects on the audience? Does the audience recognize and remember? <> What technology (printing, recordings, computers) is used to repeat, or to multiply copies?

ASSOCIATION techniques link (l) the person — the party, or policy, or product, with (2) something **already liked or desired** by (3) the intended audience. (Or, in attacks, with something **already hated or feared**.) Thus, surveys and polls are important to find out what the audience already likes and dislikes. <> Such associations can trigger intense emotions and feelings. Most obvious include any flag-waving, God-on-our-side, or "plain folks" links. Less obvious include links with any human want, need, or desire. <> Are there **explicit**, direct assertions of affiliation or membership ("I am...I belong to")? Of tastes or opinions ("I like...I believe in")? Are there **implicit**, indirect suggestions: using music, colors, flags, symbols, backgrounds? Background associations often include choice: of *companions* (advisors, friends, celebrities, spouse); of *locales* (historic sites, shrines, beautiful scenery); of *events* ("good times" — festivals, fairs; "bad times" — disaster relief). <> Any metaphors or analogies (e.g. suggesting links to sports, war, nature)? Any "name-dropping":patriotic, religious, literary, or historical allusions?

COMPOSITION involves the whole putting-together process of purposeful words and images appropriate to the intent, situation, and audience. <> What are the key content **words** — nouns (person, places, things, concepts) and verbs (actions)? The related adjectives and adverbs? <> What positive

claims about self, or negative **charges** about others, are made? Are they explicitly stated? Implicitly suggested? What generalities? What specifics? What absolutes (e.g. "it is...")? What qualifiers ("perhaps...maybe")? What hypotheticals or conditionals ("if...then")? What figures of speech: Metaphors? Rhetorical questions? Hyperbole (overstatement)? Litotes (understatement)? Puns? Irony? <> What **nonverbals** (e.g. smiles, frowns, tone of voice, backgrounds)? <> What sentence patterns are used: Balanced, parallel structures? Climactic order? <> How are the larger structures (paragraphs, essays) organized? Are ideas clear and coherent? What openers, closers, transitionals? What sequence of ideas? What proportion? What emphasis? What overall strategy? What wider context?

EXPECT PEOPLE TO DOWNPLAY THEIR OWN "BAD" (AND, IN AGGRESSION, TO DOWNPLAY OTHERS' "GOOD") BY MEANS OF OMISSION, DIVERSION, AND CONFUSION.

OMISSION, something not said or done, is very hard to analyze. Look first for possible **bad effects** and their related **causes**: what disadvantages, drawbacks, or hazards have been omitted? Are there any unwanted, harmful **side-effects**: unsafe, unhealthy, uneconomical, inefficient, unneeded? <> Any relevant omissions about the **people** involved, concealing unworthiness (crimes, scandals),or incompetence (mistakes, failures, ignorance), or being secretly allied with others? Any concealed "conflicts of interest"? Any hidden bias, favoritism, or nepotism? Any relevant omissions about proposed **plans, programs, or policies**? (e.g. any cover-ups hiding past errors, carelessness, neglect, cost overruns, options ignored, criticism suppressed? Any concealment of future risks or potential dangers? What issues get less time or less attention? Totally ignored? Any omissions about intended **purpose**? Any ulterior motives, "hidden agendas"? Any concealed benefits or payoffs which will go to supporters now or later? Any secret agreements, "backroom deals," under the table bribes, favors exchanged? Any illegal or immoral covert actions? Any censorship or restriction of contrary views? Any suppression of contradictory evidence? <> Any euphemisms used to hide, or to lessen a "bad"? Any "half-truths" used to distort or to conceal? Any omissions about the merits of the opposition?

DIVERSION occurs when time, effort, or money is spent on unimportant issues or trivial things, on **side-issues** instead of the **main issue.** But, people often do not agree on what are the main issues, or on the **priorities, mix**, and **degree** of support when several issues are involved. Identify or stipulate the priorities: What's most important? Least? Most beneficial? Most harmful? (For you, for others?) <> In politics, people often agree in general about the ends or goals (peace and prosperity), but disagree about specifics, the means, the best way, priorities, mix, or degree (the "guns or butter" debate).<> Arguments so often get "side-tracked" that many diversionary tactics have traditional names: Are there *ad hominem* attacks against the person, instead of the issue? *ad populum* appeals, focusing on the audience's emotional feelings (stirring up "gut issues"—fears, anxieties; hopes, desires)? *ad misericordium* appeals by the speaker ("poor me") for pity or sympathy? "Pointing to another wrong"? Evasions, steering clear, changing the subject away from problems? Alibis, excuses? "Red herrings" — false trails, noisy distractions? Is there an emphasis on a minor "good" — style over substance, cosmetic superficialities? In attacks, is there "nit-picking" and "hairsplitting" about petty items? Any "attacking a straw man" — focusing on an easy, minor point? Any pleasant distractions — humor, jokes, "bread and circuses"?

CONFUSION, whether caused by accidental error or deliberate deception, can hide or obscure potentially harmful items. <> Are any words unclear, uncommon, or unfamiliar? Are technical words (jargon), vague generalities, ambiguous words, or euphemisms used inappropriately to conceal the "bad"? Are there shifting definitions (equivocations)? Are statements too wordy, indirect, roundabout, or rambling? <> Are examples representative? Typical? Sufficient? <> Are comparisons within the same category? Are analogies clear and appropriate? Are there any irrational statements, illogical acts, invalid linking of ideas, or *non sequiturs*? Are there any inconsistencies or any contradictions within the text, or with past words and deeds? Any "double messages" (verbal/nonverbal incongruence)? Any factual errors? <> Are there frequent or constant changes, variations, or revisions (in plans, reports, purposes, etc.)? Are statistics (& charts, graphs, computer print-outs) accurate, clear, and meaningful? Are estimates (of unknowns, future forecasts) reasonable, probable, and based on reliable evidence? <> Are systems too complex: too many parts, processes, or intersections? Are things disorganized, incoherent, chaotic, out of sync? <> Are potential benefits and risks clear? Are goals and priorities clear or vague, fixed or shifting? Do people feel confused, overloaded, weary, burned out? Does anyone offer an easy answer or a simple solution ("trust me") to solve a complex problem?

NOT-SO-GREAT-EXPECTATIONS

Too many people get **disillusioned** by political language because they start with **illusions** about it — erroneous ideas and unrealistic expectations. It's better to start with realistic attitudes, practical information, and not-so-great-expectations.

- Expect **conflict**, arguments, disagreements. If you believe in freedom, then expect dissent. Silence, lack of opposition, is often the sign of imposed dictatorship.
- Expect **compromises**, concessions, trade-offs, deals. Most issues are negotiable, but some (dealing with principles or absolutes) may not be. Define the areas in which negotiations are possible for you.
- Expect very few clear cut **choices** between "good" and "bad." Most problems involve the greater-of-two-goods, or the lesser-of-two-evils; most arguments are about degree(how much) or priority (what should be done first).
- Expect people to agree about **general goals** (We all seek the "good"), but to disagree about **specific means**. Expect politicians to use generalities so that their audiences will imagine their own specifics.
- Expect most political language to be **persuasion** (not coercion) using words (not weapons) to get others to do something: to vote for, to support, to agree with — the politician, the party, or the policy.
- Expect persuasion to be a **mutual transaction** between benefit-promisers and benefit-seekers. Expect all people to be **benefit-seekers;** expect all persuaders to be **benefit-promisers**. Advertisers usually offer individual benefits ("You'll be happy, beautiful, beloved ... if you buy XYZ") and politicians offer social benefits ("We'll have peace, prosperity, lower taxes, more employment ... if you support XYZ").
- Expect politicians to make certain **claims** about themselves. Basically, they seek to project the image of being **trustworthy, competent**,and **benevolent**("on your side"). In attacks, the charges are that opponents are **untrustworthy**, **incompetent**,and **not on-your-side** (either self-seeking or serving "special interests").
- Expect **self-righteousness** in conflicts. Advocates often claim **knowledge** and **virtue** for self, and charge opponents with **ignorance** (unintentional, misguided, dupes) or **malice** (intentional, evil, plots, conspiracies).
- Expect **one-sided** arguments. When people advocate their own position (policy, party, candidate), they will intensify their own "good" and downplay their own "bad."
- Expect people to **downplay their own "bad"** by omitting unfavorable information, by using "softer" language (euphemisms), by diverting attention, or by obscuring it with jargon, confusing words, or complicated statistics.

- Expect persuasive messages starting with a **problem** (a threat feared) will end by offering a **solution** ("do this... vote for that"). Expect problems to be intensified during election campaigns, and at budget times: the greater the problem, the more the need for the solution.
- Expect, from the **Haves**, a conservative rhetoric stressing **protection** (keep the "good") and **prevention** (avoid the "bad").
- Expect, from the **Have-Nots**, a progressive rhetoric stressing **relief** (change the "bad") and **acquisition** (get the "good").
- Expect many political messages to be simple **repetition** of names, pictures, key words, symbols, and slogans. Such items often trigger a cluster of associated ideas.
- Expect common use of the **association** technique, which links (1) the person, party, or policy with (2) something **already loved or desired by** (3) the intended audience. (In attacks: with something **already hated or feared.**) Thus, surveys and polls are important to find out what the target audience already likes and dislikes.
- Expect that ideals of accuracy and truth are not always reached: at times, people — including politicians — can make **errors**, be **uninformed**, or deliberately **deceive**.
- Expect no sure or simple test for "truth": **any** statement can be a lie; **any** behavior can be deceptive; **any** person can deceive or be deceived.
- Expect people in power to **intensify their own "good,"** usually by means of a large "public relations" or "information" department. From the press releases of the White House, the State House, and City Hall, expect the only news to be "good news."
- Expect **money** to play a major role in human activities, including persuasion and politics."Follow the dollar" is good advice for investigators seeking to trace power, analyze budgets, or expose corruption.
- Expect to see some **slick**, well-planned, conscious, purposeful persuasion from some sources, but also some random, **strident**, irrational and crazy talk from others sources. Not all people are wired the same; some have a few loose screws !
- Expect **your own** attitudes to develop or change as you have more experience, more knowledge, and more understanding of history, sociology, and psychology.
- Expect it to be **difficult** (sometimes impossible) to sort things out, clarify issues, understand each other, set priorities, or resolve conflicts. Yet, such constant efforts are vital to a free, democratic society.

HOW TO ANALYZE "CAUSE" RHETORIC

Some persuasion involves simple sales transactions: most ads simply want individuals to buy products. Other persuasion seeks **committed collective action**: for us to join with a group to do something. Whether it's a coach giving such a **"pep talk"** to stir up and direct the energies of a team, or whether it's a political agitator, such "cause" rhetoric (commonly used by **any** group, **any** cause, **any** side) often follows a predictable four-part pattern: (1) a **THREAT** of something bad, exciting our fear or anger; (2) a **BONDING** together of the group, stressing ideas of unity, loyalty, and quality; (3) for an altruistic good **CAUSE**, a goal opposing the bad; (4) leading to a **RESPONSE**, doing specific actions. To analyze "cause" rhetoric, sort out the parts using this basic four-part pattern of the **"pep talk"**:

1. THREAT

Threats are very emotionally intense, using **name-calling** (attack words), **"horror stories"**(narratives), and **"atrocity pictures"**(visuals). <> People have **predictable fears** (in categories such as: ***death, destruction, dominance, invasion, restriction, inequality, chaos***) which can be excited by persuaders on all sides in a conflict, stirring up feelings of righteous anger and revenge. <> Persuaders have predictable tactics. **Direct** conflicts are fairly easy to analyze. For example, in territory disputes (invasion), those who **have** possession of the land emphasize protection (Defend! Save!) and stir up fear of loss to bond their group. The **have-nots** who also claim the land, to bond their group, stir up anger at unjust deprivation, and call for change or revenge. <> But, many conflicts are **indirect** or oblique. Although both sides may see themselves as being right,they are focused on different issues and have different premises, priorities, and goals. <> To help clarify, identify and sort out the various aspects of the threat, **ask:**

> What is the threat? **Identify** what is feared or provokes anger.

> What **kind** of threat? Classify, or **categorize** it (e.g. death, destruction, dominance, invasion, restriction, inequality, and chaos — are the 7 major categories used in *The Pep Talk*) so that you become more aware of the cluster of predictable words and images commonly used in such situations.

> Is it a **direct** conflict, head-on against the other side? (e.g. territory disputes)

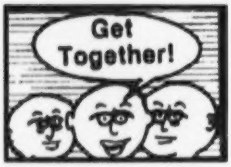
> Or is it an **indirect**,oblique conflict, with the sides emphasizing different threats? (e.g. in the abortion controversy) What does each side say is the key issue?

> **Name-calling**: What attack words are used to describe the foe?

> Does this foe have an evil leader?

> Are the people on the other side **evil**? Or uninformed, **misguided**?

> **Horror stories & atrocity pictures**: What narratives and visuals, what stories and scenes (including rumors, movies, TV newsclips) are used to show the evil deeds? (True or false, genuine or not, such scenes — especially showing dead or bloody victims — are very effective to trigger emotional responses.)


Get Together!

2. BONDING

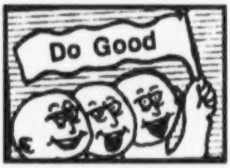
Bonding rhetoric is used to bring a group together, keep it together, and build pride. In all groups, three key common themes are **unity** ("united we stand"), **loyalty** ("be true to your ..."), and **pride** (of being right, or being best: "We're Number One").

> Are there words or slogans stressing **unity, loyalty**, and **pride**?

> Are there words calling for specific **bonding actions** (e.g. to join, enlist, support, give, donate, stand up for)

> Are symbolic **nonverbals** used for bonding? (e.g. uniforms, colors, flags, music — especially religious and patriotic)

> Are there group bonding **activities**? (e.g. cheering, singing, marching, picketing, demonstrating)



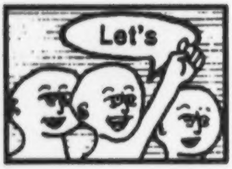
3. CAUSE

Cause rhetoric involves the ideas of **duty, defense**, and **altruism**. People justify their involvement in group effort by a sense of their obligation to defend another: either the group (e.g. nation, homeland, religion) or someone weaker, or unable to defend one's self (e.g. children, unborn, animals, environment, the poor). <> The "good" sought will be the reverse of the threat feared; this goal will be expressed either in terms of general concepts (e.g. victory, peace, prosperity, life, liberty, equality, justice) or specific issues.

> **Who** is being defended? The group? Someone weaker?

> **What** is the "good" sought? In general terms? In specifics?

> Are there **duty** words used? (e.g. duty, job, task, mission, obligation, responsibility; should, must, ought to)



4. RESPONSE

Response is the ultimate goal of this whole process of persuasion. After the emotional energies have been stimulated, organized together in a bonded group, and directed at a goal, the persuader tries to trigger a response, a specific action: **fight, keep, change, seize, stop, go, up with, down with** — whatever is appropriate. <> Urgency and extremity words are often used: "now or never... we've had enough ... last straw... breaking point."

> What **specific action** is sought?

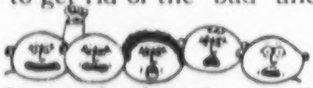
> Are **urgency** or **extremity** words used?

> Is this primarily **conservative** rhetoric?

(**Protection** & **prevention:** to keep the "good" and avoid the "bad.")

> Is this primarily **progressive** rhetoric?

(**Relief** & **acquisition**: to get rid of the "bad" and get the "good.")



Common problems in analyzing "cause" rhetoric:

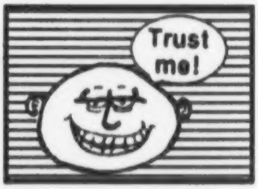
It's hard to be cool, calm, and rational with words and images which are often **deliberately designed** to incite, inflame, stir the emotions, or make people angry or afraid.

Unlike ads (usually complete "packages"), we often see only **bits and fragments** of "cause" rhetoric: slogans, pickets signs, rumors, brief TV shots, or quotes. Sometimes we see these fragments **out of sequence**, thus this "pep talk" pattern is a useful framework to sort out and organize the chaos.

Expect **surface variations**, many different specific ways of saying or suggesting the same basic concepts. Inconsistency is common. People use many different phrasings, definitions, and meanings for things, and often change focus or shift premises. Observers need to be alert and flexible, seek dominant impressions, and avoid pigeonholing.

Persuasion analysis is **not** always popular, especially with the persuaders (who want response, not analysis), or with groups seeking unquestioning response from their members.

Knowing this pattern of the "pep talk" doesn't tell us who is "right," what claims and charges are "true," what evidence is reliable, nor what to do. But we can better recognize and understand the rhetoric used by any group — both those to which we belong and those we oppose. We may defend ourselves from being deceived or exploited by others, or from being self-righteous or narrow-minded. From our understanding of how people on "the other side" see their roles, we may gain tolerance, perhaps even compassion.



IMAGES & ISSUES

How to Analyze Election Rhetoric

People often complain vaguely about political language ("it's all promises ... all lies ... too confusing") or ignore it and drop out, because they don't understand some basics. Appreciate free elections: using words and images (not force and violence), persuaders seek support for themselves and their ideas.

Prepare yourself to analyze political language in a non-partisan, common sense way. We don't know in advance whether a message is true or not, beneficial or not, cogent or not; but, we do know some predictable patterns in **content** and **form**.

CONTENT. The core message of a candidate can be basically summarized as: **"I am competent and trustworthy; from me, you'll get more good and less bad."** This one sentence contains three claims (**competent, trustworthy,** and **benevolent** — as in Aristotle's ethos) and a promise of benefits.

If politicians are "always promising," remember that **we** are always **benefit-seeking**. No matter how we define "good" and "bad," we want to get and to keep the "good" and to avoid or to change the "bad." Thus:

> Expect from the Haves, a **conservative rhetoric**, stressing protection (keep the "good") and prevention (avoid the "bad").

> Expect from the Have-Nots, a **progressive rhetoric**, stressing relief (change the "bad") and acquisition (get the "good").

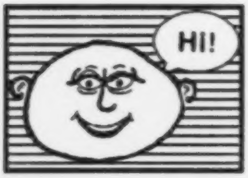
Persuaders often "make problems." To an audience of Haves, conservative persuaders stir up fears and anxieties of loss; to an audience of Have-Nots, progressive persuaders stir up discontent and dissatisfaction with an existing "bad," or anger and resentment for being deprived. After stirring up these fears and hatreds, persuaders often try to bond their group together, then direct and trigger their energies toward a specific action.

Conservative rhetoric, as used here, is the rhetoric of the Haves who seek **to keep the "good"** (protection) and **to avoid the "bad"** (prevention). It is the rhetoric of the Establishment, defending the *status quo*, justifying the way things are. Generally this is the rhetoric of the current administration (whoever is in the White House, the State House, and City Hall); of corporations, organizations, and government bureaucracies; of those people who have control and power. Conservative rhetoric stresses satisfaction, contentment, appreciation, and enjoyment of the existing "goods"; pride in the group, its past history, traditions, and heroes; and in its present accomplishments and leaders. Conservative rhetoric encourages the self-image of being a defender of the society (the nation, the culture, the faith). Warnings, precautions, and anxieties are focused on the main threat: the *fear of loss* — either suddenly (by seizure, by being overwhelmed or conquered) or slowly (by decay, attrition, or infiltration). It is reasonable to expect that people who have a "good" will want to keep it, and to avoid the "bad" of losing it or having it taken away.

Progressive rhetoric, as used here, is the rhetoric of the Have-Nots who seek **to change the "bad"** (relief) and **to get the "good"** (acquisition). It is the rhetoric of dissatisfaction, discontent, and anger for not having the "good"; it is also the rhetoric of hopes, dreams, change, progress, and improvement. It not only attacks the existing evils, but also holds out hope for a better future. Generally, this is the rhetoric of the opposition, the Outs, the protesters and the picketers, the people not in power. Progressive rhetoric ranges from reformers, who want to change or fix up parts of the existing system, to revolutionaries who want to destroy it and replace it with a better one. Progressive rhetoric stresses the problems of the existing order and criticizes the caretakers, especially for corruption (intentional) or incompetence (unintentional). Progressive rhetoric encourages the self-image of being a defender of the poor (the unfortunate, the underprivileged, the victims). In addition to the specific problem involved, progressive rhetoric often suggests fears of *stasis* (being stopped, stalled, thwarted), either suddenly (banned, controlled) or slowly (exhausted, burned out). It is reasonable to expect that people who have a "bad" will want to get rid of it, and to get the "good."

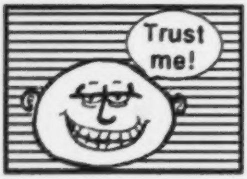
FORM. The "**pitch**" and the "**pep talk**" are terms used here to describe two commonly seen patterns of persuasion, the structure underneath most messages.

The "**pitch**" is basically a five-part strategy, usually seen in commercial advertising, but also common in political ads. To focus on this pattern, **ask these questions:**



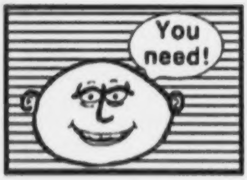
1. What attention-getting techniques are used?

Often, simple repetition for name recognition; thus, many posters, buttons, TV spots.



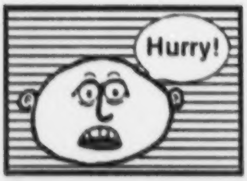
2. What confidence-building techniques are used?

The goal is to project the "image" of being competent, trustworthy, and benevolent. Note the smiles, handshakes, sincere looks, the endorsements, and the patriotic associations.



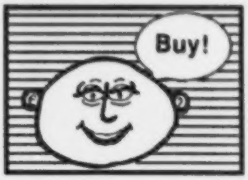
3. What desire-stimulating techniques are used?

Conservatives and progressives emphasize different aspects, stimulating either desires for "goods" or fears of "bads." Commercial ads focus on specific individual benefits, whereas most political ads stress general social benefits (e.g. peace, prosperity, honest and efficient government). Everyone agrees on these as general goals, but disagrees about specific means to them.



4. Are there urgency-stressing techniques used?

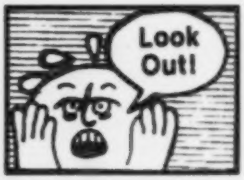
Common in campaigns; sometimes an intense "now-or-never, before it's too late" plea.



5. What response is sought?

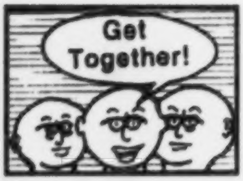
Often, simply to vote for the person or party.

The **"pep talk"** seeks ***committed collective action***. It's less common; but more intense, stirring emotions of fear and anger, as in party rallies, single-issue or "cause" groups, war propaganda, and in targeted direct-mail ads. The "pep talk" usually has a four-part pattern of **Threat, Bonding, Cause,** and **Response.** To focus on this pattern, **ask these questions**:



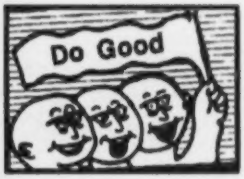
1. What is the threat feared?

The danger? The possible loss? Who are the foes? The victims? The warning-givers? What "horror stories" are told?


Get Together!

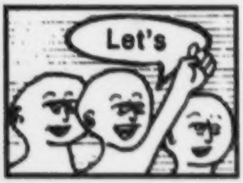
2. What words and nonverbals are used in bonding the group?

Sometimes meetings, rallies, marching, singing, or cheering stressing unity, loyalty, and pride ("We're Number 1 !")



3. What is the "cause" defended?

What duty words are used? (should, ought, must) What defense words? (save, protect, help) What other needs the defending? (the nation, the people, the workers, the poor, the children, the animals, the environment).



4. What response is sought?

Simply to vote? Or more? (e.g. to join, enlist, work, fight, picket, march, give, donate)

Analysis of form and content is limited. It does not examine truth or deception, accuracy or error, intent or consequences, but it's a useful start. Our ultimate goal? Knowledge, understanding, insight, tolerance, and perhaps even compassion.

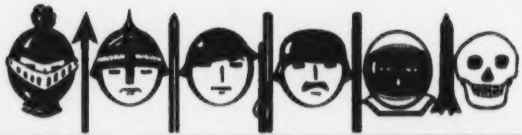
Moral Superiority: A Common Pattern
—from *The Pep Talk*

Nothing so pleases one's own advocates nor so infuriates the opposition as the claim to moral superiority. Because joining in a "cause" so favorably affects the self-image, advocates often feel very noble and self-righteous. Sometimes this is expressed very explicitly as when we hear people using military-religious metaphors ("Onward Christian Soldiers"). More frequently, this God-on-our-side attitude is an *implicit, unspoken* assumption. If we were specifically to claim such righteousness, such an explicit statement would often provoke skepticism and counter-claims by putting it so bluntly. But, our *assumptions* are seldom investigated, scrutinized, or subjected to rational "proofs."

When people intensify their own "good," they tend to see themselves as being competent and informed, possessing the "truth" and acting with "good intentions." Sometimes advocates see their opponents as intentionally evil, but, more commonly, they see their opponents as ignorant, misguided, or unintentional dupes of a more powerful "hidden enemy." Variations and synonyms are common, but the advocate's attitude can be expressed in one basic sentence: **"We are informed and good; they are ignorant and evil."**

Left-wingers often view their opponents as "pawns" or "tools" of the rich (Big Business, capitalists, the Military-Industrial-Complex, Swiss bankers, cartels, corporations, conglomerates, Texas oil millionaires, the Establishment, organized religion, etc.). Right-wingers often view their opponents as "dupes" of the commies (creeping socialism, the international communist conspiracy, etc.) or agents of the devil. Zealots are not confined to any particular political ideology. Perhaps the common denominator is the need for "being right" which contributes to a polarized good guys/bad guys mentality.

WAR PROPAGANDA



Words are weapons in warfare. Words affect how people think about themselves and others. War is probably the time of the greatest language manipulation, when people are most likely to deceive others, least able to negotiate, and are under the most intense emotional stress — of fear and hatred — with the greatest real dangers of loss, death, and destruction.

"Propaganda" is often used as a general attack word to label any claims or charges from opponents, rivals, or critics. Here, however, two terms are used with specific meanings: **War propaganda**, here refers to persuasion targeted at an internal audience: to bond one's own group, to build morale (a belief in "being right" and in "being able"), to get people to agree and to get involved, to silence internal opposition, and to direct action. **Psychological warfare**, here refers to persuasion designed to demoralize or terrorize an external audience.

Both kinds of persuasion pose a great danger today. Unlike all previous eras, TV now gives persuaders quick access to huge audiences, and powerful new weapons are rather easily available to nations, small groups, and individuals. During 40 years of "peace" (1945-1985), 20 million people were killed in "small" wars: conflicts about dominance, money, territory, ethnic and religious issues — all of which were "justified" by words.

War propaganda can be deliberately manipulated by professional persuaders (a "thermostat effect" calculated to heat up or cool a crisis), but, once started, sometimes it can get totally out of control (a "wildfire effect") with unpredictable results. Certain beliefs and attitudes, emotions and feelings, can rather easily lead to seriously harmful actions. Many people are unstable, angry at real or imagined problems.

If our goals are to resolve conflicts, to lessen tensions, to promote peace, then it helps if we understand how language has often been used in warfare. From observation — and history — consider this basic premise: **People intensify their own "good" and downplay their own "bad"; and, in aggression, people intensify others' "bad" and downplay others' "good."**

Applied to the war propaganda of any nation or group, these concepts are useful to sort out (as in the paragraphs on the next two pages) and analyze common predictable patterns in **form** and **content**.

Intensify Own "Good"

All people **claim virtue** and **seek justice**. Persuaders often repeat key themes: (1) to justify the Cause ("Our nation, our leader, our policies, our actions are right and just"); (2) to bond the group together (themes of unity, loyalty, pride); (3) to focus energy for action (join, work, fight). Words are used to resolve the will, to stir the feelings, to trigger action. Basically, words tell us what to believe, feel, and do.

Such ideas can be expressed in direct explicit claims (as in "glittering generalities" or praise words) or indirect suggestions by means of words, images, music, and other nonverbals associated with things already liked by the intended audience. Stories (narratives — including rumors, books, movies) present heroes as role models for us to imitate their virtues (bravery, endurance, loyalty) and their actions (fighting hard, working, obeying orders).

Rhetoric of the **Haves** (established governments: e.g. strong rivals such as USA/USSR) stresses **defense/protection** of what they have: fear is the key emotion, loss is the threat.

Rhetoric of the **Have-Nots** (the poor, the dispossessed; e.g. revolutionaries, "terrorists") stresses **change/relief:** anger is the key emotion, continued deprivation is the threat.

Downplay Own "Bad"

Omission is the primary way people downplay their own "bad." Governments can suppress, conceal, hide, or cover-up their "bad" (errors, crimes, problems, weaknesses, or any unfavorable information) by means of secrecy, censorship, or controls to ban the press or internal critics — silencing, eliminating, or "disappearing" the opposition. Degree of omission varies: even in peace, some societies are very "closed," others relatively open.

Denials may include both deliberate lying and also self-deceptive wishful thinking, alibis, and excuses. People often try to downplay the bad by a kind of a "word magic" denying that something is, is bad, is not that bad, or denying responsibility("I didn't do it") or intent ("I didn't mean it").

Euphemisms are common — "softer words" which lessen, sweeten, minimize, understate, blur, or obscure the "bad."

Confusion can mask or hide problems, causing a smokescreen effect. In language, confusion can be caused by carelessness, errors, ambiguity, vagueness, unfamiliar words, contradictions, circumlocutions, frequent changes or variations, or anything which can distract, confuse, or overload the audience.

Intensify Others' "Bad"

Verbal aggression, words used to stir emotions (anger, disgust, fear) to incite people to hate others, is often the most intense form of war propaganda. Everyone has predictable fears about death, destruction, loss of possessions, territory, or freedom. Persuaders, on either side, can intensify such fears in order to excite, bond, and direct their own group to action (fight, work, revenge).

In war, expect intense (1) **"name-calling"** (invectives, attack words)and images associating or depicting the enemy as diabolical or inhuman — a savage, animal, monster; (2) **"horror stories"** (narratives — including rumors, books, movies) showing the enemy's evil deeds, atrocities, and bloody victims — stimulating hatred and righteous anger to seek revenge. In war, all armies commit atrocities, yet people tend to believe the worst about their enemies — even a "big lie" if often repeated.

Urgency and danger are intensified by **warnings** using extremist language of "ultimates" (Doomsday, slavery): the greater the threat, the greater the need for a war, or a big military budget.

Downplay Others' "Good"

Neglect is the primary way people downplay others' "good." Some people are egocentric and ethnocentric — simply disregard, ignore, lack concern for, have an aversion toward other groups, strangers, or foreigners. In war, people often know very little about their opponents' culture, history, customs, beliefs, or family life. Warring nations frequently ban the music, art, literature, or any favorable aspect of their opponents.

Intolerance. People often deny (block out, won't listen to) any contrary ideas, opinions, or beliefs. They often won't consider the possible "rightness" of their opponents' cause, of their legitimate needs and wants, or genuine fears and grievances.

Disrespect. Words and attitudes, which are patronizing, condescending toward others, treating others as less than equal, or less than human (including humor - mockery, ridicule, sarcasm), are meant to belittle, degrade, or insult others.

Abstractions. It's easier to kill "things" than to kill human beings: mothers, fathers, or children. In war, language often de-personalizes and de-humanizes others. When language becomes more abstract and general (including numbers, statistics, "body counts"), people become less able to "see" (to visualize, to comprehend) the concrete details, or the specific individuals.

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Students doing research on contemporary advertising issues will find useful and relevant information in *Advertising Age*, Business Periodicals Index, and the New York Times Index.

Using a CD-ROM DATABASE (such as InfoTrac) or ON-LINE (such as Dialog), search for key words such as "advertising." For FTC, see: U.S. Federal Trade Commission.

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